A Practical Treatise CONCERNING *Evil THOUGHTS.*

Wherein are some things more especially useful for *Melancholy Persons.*

By *WILLIAM CHILCOT*, M.A.

Ecce coram tot millibus populorum nudabuntur omnes iniquitates meæ, tot agminibus Angelorum patebunt universa scelera mea; non solum actuum sed etiam Cogitationum, *simulque locutionum!* August. Lib. 4. Medit.

EXON,
Printed by *Samuel Darker*, for *Charles Tee*, *John Pearce*, and *Philip Bishop*. 1698.

To the Inhabitants of the Parishes of St. *John*, St. *George* the Martyr, and *Allhollows* on the Walls, in the City of *Exon*.

BRETHREN,

THE *following* Treatiſe *contains the ſubſtance of ſeveral Diſcourſes delivered to you from the* Pulpit. *The ſub-*

ject of it is undeniably moſt uſe-ful, and of the greateſt impor-tance to our eternal welfare. And the more I conſider of it, the more I am perſwaded of its moment. And becauſe it is a matter of difficulty too, and re-quires more laſting attention of the Mind, than any Perſon (how well ſoever diſpoſed) can give to Sermons *when ſpoken: I thought fit to publiſh it, that ſo you might have theſe Directions always be-fore you, which I hope may* ſome-what *aſſiſt you in the perfor-mance of ſo great a Work. And*

as

as a teſtimony of my great Reſpect; and an Acknowledgment of the many Obligations I have received from you, I have dedicated them to you: The rather hoping that you will the more attentively peruſe them, and more ſeriouſly and earneſtly apply them. Whatever defects there are in this Treatiſe; *I hope my ſincerity will be a ſufficient Protection to the meanneſs of my Endeavours. All my Aim being to contribute to your Spiritual, and eternal Advantage: Which is,*

and

and ſhall be always part of the conſtant, and earneſt Prayer of

Your daily Oratour at the
Throne of Grace,

WILLIAM CHILCOT.

Exon, May
2. 1698.

A

Practical Treatise

Concerning

Evil Thoughts.

Matth. 15. 19.

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts ——

I Am now entred upon a ſubject which demands more than ordinary attention of the Reader. The Government of the Thoughts is what I intend to diſcourſe on from theſe words.

Which, as it is a matter of the greateſt importance, ſo it is a thing of no ſmall difficulty. Few Medicines can reach internal wounds, and he is an Artiſt indeed that can cure them. But notwithſtanding the difficulty, I have attempted it; and ſhall lay before you the beſt method that I can, in order to the well-governing of the thoughts. Which when attained, is an Atchievement above thoſe of the Greateſt Conquerors, and deſerves Trophies beyond the moſt famous Exploits of Victory that ever were made. The wiſeſt of men telling us, *that he that ruleth his Spirit, is better than he that taketh a City.* And our own

Prov. 16. 32.

ex-

experience confirms this ſentence of the wiſe man. For there is nothing a more common Obſervation than that Great Generals and Captains, who have carried their Arms through diſtant Nations, and have done wonders, and even brought the world into ſubjection; have yet been ſlaves to their own ſelves; tamely yeilded to their own corrupt and wicked hearts, and have not obtained a Conqueſt over their own thoughts. They have not avoided ſoiling their Triumphs with their Vices, and aſperſing their glorious Actions with a wicked life. As if the Reward of their beſt Actions were to be their worſt, and as if it were

a Crown to their Arms to be diſſolved in Luſt, and all manner of Impieties: As if the bleſſing of ſucceſs were Riot and Intemperance, and the greateſt of ſins to be their Heralds. What can be a greater and truer Reflection than this? which as it takes off from the Credit and Applauſe of the Nobleſt Actions, ſo it ſerves to ſhew us, that 'tis a more difficult task to conquer our own thoughts than the moſt potent Adverſaries; to ſubdue our Hearts and Souls than whole Battalions; and that man is the greateſt enemy to himſelf: *For out of the Heart proceed evil thoughts*---He that ſearcheth the heart, and know-

eth

eth the thoughts, ſpake theſe words.

The Occaſion on which he ſpake them ſhall be the *Firſt thing* which I ſhall conſider.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew the vaſt advantage of well-governing our thoughts, in order to the purpoſes of Religion in general.

Thirdly, That evil thoughts ariſe out of the heart, and proceed from thence; which lays an Obligation on us of reſtraining them, and how far we are able ſo to do.

Fourthly, I ſhall lay down ſome General Rules and Directions for our eaſier and better performing of this great,

and difficult, and abſolutely neceſſary work, of well-governing the thoughts. And,

Fifthly, I ſhall ſelect ſome ſpecial kinds of evil thoughts, and ſhall diſcourſe more particularly and diſtinctly of them, and what are the proper Remedies againſt them.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

THE Occaſion on which our bleſſed Lord and Saviour ſpake theſe words: *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts*----was this:

The *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, who were the Teachers and Expounders of the *Jewiſh* Law, and whoſe buſineſs it was to give the true meaning of it: Inſtead of that did groſly pervert the real deſign, ſenſe and meaning of it; put erroneous and falſe Gloſſes upon it, and many times impoſed their own Traditions upon the people in the place of it. And yet

none pretended a more ſtrict Obſervance of the Law than they. Inſomuch that we find them in the beginning of this Chapter with an uſual arrogance, demanding of our Saviour, *Why do thy Diſciples tranſgreſs the tradition of the Elders? For they waſh not their hands when they eat bread.* To which our Saviour gives this anſwer; (*viz.*) That they of all men had the leaſt reaſon to tax his Diſciples with the neglect of ſuch a Ceremony as waſhing before meat; as if that were ſuch an Invaſion upon Tradition, and a crying ſin; when they themſelves were guilty of a much greater, in endeavouring to vacate

V. 2.

the

the Obligation of the fifth Commandment by falſly ſuppoſing a caſe which would diſcharge them from honouring and relieving their Parents; and ſo making void the Commandment of God by their own Tradition, with a witneſs. Their *Corban* was an effectual way to cover their Avarice, and they could not have invented a more colourable pretence to varniſh over their moſt ſordid and unnatural Temper than that was. Mark 7. 11, 12.

And indeed this was their common Method, when they had any Wicked deſign in hand, then to ſeem moſt Religious: And when they *made long Prayers* 'twas but too

too ſure a ſign of their *devouring Widows Houſes.* And for this reaſon our Bleſſed Lord doth ſo often and ſo ſeverely rebuke them; particularly here, where after he had given them ſuch an Anſwer as he did; he expoſeth and layeth them open to the People, and Cenſures the Vanity and Hypocriſie of all their Religious pretentions. And directing His Diſcourſe to the People, He aſſures them that true Religion Conſiſteth not in ſuch outward Waſhings and Cleanſings and Ceremonious Purgations; but in the Spiritual and inward purification of the Mind and Soul, the Fountain of all our Thoughts and

Imagi-

Imaginations, and of our Actions the Product of them. That if the Heart be pure and Holy, the Thoughts and then the Actions will be so too: But if the Heart be foul and wicked, the issues of it will be Correspondent. When the Spirit of a Man is truely sealoned with Religion, it will shew it self in all the Beautious and Lovely Fruits of Righteousness. But when the Principle is vicious and Debauch'd, the effects must and will be filthy and abominable. That a Man is not defiled by any material thing that he either Eats or Drinks, but by his own imaginations, desires and affections, *the things which come out*

of

of him. For out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Theſts, Falſe-witneſſes, Blaſphemies, theſe are the things which defile a Man: But to eat with unwaſhen Hands defileth not a Man.

All the Ceremonious part of the *Jewiſh* Law aim'd at, and terminated in this. Their Ceremonies were Significations and Types of matters under the Goſpel. And their frequent Waſhings and Cleanſings, were to denote the Spiritual Purifying of the Heart and Soul.

'Tis true, God injoyned them to be obſerved for a time, the Ignorance and Non-

age

age of the *Jews* requiring such a material and grosse way of Instruction: But these were all Abolished and done away, at the coming of the Messiah. When the Son of God himself became our Divine Instructor and Teacher, and informed Mankind of the Nature of that Rational and Spiritual Worship, which God did expect from us, and would be acceptable to Him. That it was the Devotion of the Soul, the Purity of the Heart, the Spirituality of the Thoughts, that Living Sacrifice alone, that would please God who is an Infinite Spirit, and prepare us for the Refined joys of Heaven, and the

Exalted

Exalted pleaſures of Seraphims: And Conſequently, that the greateſt and moſt Important Duty incumbent on Mankind, was to Govern the Heart and ſubdue the Thoughts. This then, in ſhort, was the occaſion of our Saviours ſpeaking theſe Words; which did effectually humble theſe proud *Phariſees*, whoſe whole Religion was mere Pomp and outward Shew; and Conſiſted meerly in broad Phylacteries, an affected Garb, and demure Looks; while theſe *Gaudy and Painted Sepulchres, were within full of all manner of rottenneſs and uncleaneſs*: And at the ſame time lets us ſee a Deſcription

ſcription of true Religion, and how excellent and noble an Inſtitution that is, which extends to the inmoſt receſſes of the Soul, and ſo tends to Refine the very thoughts of the Heart, and to fit Men for the pure State of Angels. And therefore, is far above all other Inſtitutions that ever were in the World before.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

THE next thing proposed to be Handled is the vast advantage of well governing of our Thoughts, in order to the purposes of Religion in General. Now this advantage is very great and obvious: Every Person must be Convinced that the most proper and only way for a Man to live well, is to begin at his Heart; to put his thoughts into a true order and government. For otherwise, there can be no Uniformity in his Piety. The good Actions that he doth are broken and imperfect; and he

he is apt every now and then to make freſh Work for Repentance, by returning to his old ſins. But this advantage of the well governing our Thoughts will be the better ſeen by ſome Particulars.

Firſt then, a care of our Thoughts is the greateſt preſervative againſt actual ſins. 'Tis a moſt certain truth, that the greateſt ſin that ever was committed was at firſt but a Thought. The fouleſt Wickedneſs, and moſt Monſtrous Impiety, aroſe from ſo ſmall a ſpeck as a firſt Thought may be reſembled to. The moſt horrid thing that ever was done, as well as the moſt Noble and Vertuous action that I.

ever was accompliſhed, had no greater a beginning. Of ſuch a quick growth, and ſpreading Nature is ſin, that it Rivals even the Kingdome of Heaven, which our Lord teleth us, *is like to a Graine of Muſtard-ſeed, which a Man took and Sowed in his Field. Which indeed, is the leaſt of all ſeeds; but when it is grown up* [in theſe Countries] *it is the greateſt among Herbs, and becometh a Tree, ſo that the Birds of the Air come and Lodge in the Branches of it.* But the Apoſtle St. *James*, Repreſents it by a Simile of another Nature, comparing the Original and growth of it to the Formation of an Embryo

Mat. 13. 31.

Jam. 1. 13,14,15.

in

in the Womb. *Let no Man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any* Man. *But every Man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own Luſt and inticed. Then when his Luſt hath Conceived, it bringeth forth ſin, and ſin when it is finiſhed bringeth forth Death.* It is Conceived, Bred, Lives, and Grows in a Man, till at laſt it domineers in him, and *Reigns in his Mortal Body.* Rom. 6. 12. And therefore it is abſolutely neceſſary, that we govern and manage our Thoughts, without which it will be impoſſible that we ſhould avoid falling into actual ſins, even the

greateſt. That we reſiſt the beginings, the very firſt Emergencies of Evil, if we hope to avoid the laſt Degrees of it.

It is manifeſt folly to Imagine that we can indulge evil Thoughts, without being in danger of commtting actual ſins, or that ſpeculation and practiſe are things ſo vaſtly diſtant from each other. This is ſo far from being true, that there can be nothing more certain than the contrary. If we would preſerve our ſelves from falling into actual ſins, we muſt govern and ſuppreſs our Thoughts. And if we would have our Life pure and unſpotted, the Heart muſt be

kept

kept in intire ſubjection. If we would not be plunged into the guilt of preſumptuous ſins, we muſt be ſure to reſiſt the firſt motions of evil, all unlawful Thoughts. For no man is always in the ſame temper, his Reſolution is not ever the ſame as it may be now, or at another time. His Paſſions are Fluctuating; ſometimes there is (as it may be called) a Spring-Tide of them. And a Man at ſome ſeaſons is more receptive of evil impreſſions, more yielding and eaſy to be tempted, than at others. And though an evil Thought may not ſo ſtrongly move him at one time, yet it may at another. And every encou-

ragement of it, adds to the falſeneſs and treachery of his own deceitful and wicked heart, which will betray him whenever an opportunity offers. And therefore he is neceſſitated to be nicely careful over his thoughts, if he would not fall into actual ſins.

Let us think as boldly and confidently of our ſelves as we pleaſe; let us reſt never ſo much upon our own ſtrength; it is our weakneſs. 'Tis not our preſuming thoughts of our ſelves that will make us invincible. Nay, there are none ſooner overcome and thrown down than ſuch as conceit great and mighty things of themſelves. The ſhameful de-

nial

nial of the warm and boasting Apostle, should be sufficient to convince us that the best of men are not above that advice, (1 *Cor.* 10. 12.) *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* If we do not keep a strict watch, and a careful hand over our thoughts, they will inevitably betray us when an opportunity serves, and make most furious assaults upon us, when we are least aware of it. We can no more restrain them when we please (whatever we think) we can no more stop them from breaking out, than we can smother a raging Flame, or chain a foaming Billow. And therefore whosoever he be that allows Mat. 26. 70, 72, 74.

his thoughts an extravagant liberty, he is much miſtaken if he thinks that he is ſure to ſtop there.

II. But admit that he could: Can it be thought by any Rational Creature that God doth not take any notice of his thoughts themſelves? Suppoſe it were in the power of any perſon to act contrary to his habit of thinking, and to avoid the practice of theſe ſins which he indulges himſelf in the ſpeculation of: Hath an Omniſcient and an holy God, think you, no regard to the thoughts and the inward temper and diſpoſition of the Soul? If we think ſo, then we have mean thoughts of him indeed; and make

make Religion degenerate into the ſervice of brute beaſts. For wherein doth man differ from them but in his *Reaſon* and *Thought*? and that he is capable of knowing God; of being raviſh'd with his Excellencies and Perfections, and encouraged by his ſuitable Rewards, and taking delight in the glorious Communications of himſelf to his Soul, and ſerving him with his whole heart, and being united to him by a life of thought? Upon which conſideration it muſt needs follow, that the Great God is ſo far from diſregarding our thoughts, that he hath a principal reſpect to them. And tho it ſhould chance that they

ſhould

ſhould never break out into Actions, and Groſs Practices, yet God looks to the *inward parts*; is a narrow obſerver, and ſearcher of the thoughts: is pleaſed when his Throne is eſtabliſhed in the Soul, and his Dominion and Empire over all its Thoughts and imaginations; and abhors and abandons an unclean, wicked, or Rebellious Heart. To him all the Pomp of Religion and ſplendor of outward Performances is without it deteſtable. The Soul is the Seat of Religion; As for the Parts and Members of our Bodies, they are intirely at the Command of the Mind. The Underſtanding and Will are their

Iſa. 1. 11.

their Deſpotick Rulers. And as the Heart and the Thoughts are diſpoſed, ſo is the Practice and Converſation; and therefore, them the Almighty principally regards. As a Man can never teſtifie the truth of his Love to God, or evidence the Sincerity of his Soul, without having a ſpecial regard to the well Governing of his Thoughts: So without it, Damnation may juſtly be his Portion, tho the Plague break not out in the Botches and Ulcers of a profligate Converſation, tho the Pollution be concealed and hidden. Indeed if we are ſo prophane as to think of God as a Man, and eſteem Him to be ſuch an

one

one as our ſelves: If His Eye could not penetrate any deeper than ours, but were fallible and weak; If he could not ſee into our Breaſts, and diſcover the Secrets of our Hearts: Then there might be ſome reaſon for us to imagine that He did not regard our Thoughts, ſo our viſible behaviour were ſmooth and untainted. But ſince He is an All-ſeeing and an All-knowing God, and profeſſedly declares himſelf ſuch in the Sacred Scriptures: The reaſon of Man cannot ſubmit to ſuch an idle fancy as this, *viz.* that He hath no reſpect to a Mans Thoughts; but on the contrary, muſt believe, that He

Pſal. 139.

hath

hath an eſpecial Eye to them, and will aſſuredly call us to an Account for them at the Day of Judgment.

For tho our Saviour's Diſcourſe, (*Mat.* 12.36.) extends only to *every idle word*, yet in the very Verſe before he ſhews that the *Heart* is principally regarded, and therefore to be obſerved by our ſelves. And more fully and clearly in his divine Sermon on the Mount, (Mat.5.20.) *For I ſay unto you, that except your Righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not kill;*

and

and whoſoever ſhall kill ſhall be in danger of the Judgment: But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever is angry with his brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the Judgment. And v. 27. *Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not commit Adultery; but I ſay unto you, that whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath committed Adultery already with her in his heart.* From all which it plainly appears, that if a man could indulge himſelf in all manner of Licentious *thoughts* without any further danger, yet that (God knows) is evil ſufficient, becauſe the *thoughts of the Heart* are principally regarded by Almighty God.

But

But indeed it is hardly poſſible to imagine how any perſon that is *careleſs of his heart*, ſhould be otherwiſe of *his Life*; or how he that is vain, filthy, or any way Vicious in his Imaginations, can be pure and holy, ſober and Religious in his Converſation and Practice. Upon both which accounts we ſee the *vaſt Advantage* that we ſhall *iufallibly reap* by being diligent and careful in the *well-governing of our thoughts*. But,

Thirdly, That which will ſerve to make us further ſenſible of the *great advantage of well-governing our thoughts*, is this, Viz. *That we ſhall ever be in a preparation for the beſt* III.

and

and most weighty Duties by this means. We shall not only be able to resist and repel the fury of temptations, but be ready for the performance of every Duty. These men that have not inur'd themselves to an habit of Thought, and constantly exercised a strict regimen over the motions of their own Hearts, will require a great deal of time to recollect and order their Thoughts, and reduce them into a proper Frame and Posture. These that carelessly give their Minds a loose, as soon as any solemn and weighty Duty is over, and suffer their Thoughts to return to the old Subject of the World, or any other of their

Vanities.

Vanities. The ſame difficulty will attend them to bring their Thoughts into a due Frame again which did at firſt. So that they will thereby be mightily hindered in their advances in Religion. Their progreſs in Holineſs will be much retarded. They labour in a Circle. Or at beſt they will move but ſlowly on, in the way to Heaven, in compariſon of theſe that keep a conſtant and ſtrict Government over their Thoughts. Theſe latter will be able always to ſay with the Pſalmiſt *O God my Heart is ready, my Heart is ready.* And what an happy and deſirable temper of Soul is this? What Spiritual

Pſal. 108. 1.

comforts and benefits do these enjoy, which others for want of a due care, and watchfulness deprive themselves of? These only want an opportunity of serving God and performing Holy Duties: Others want a due Temper and Disposition when they have an opportunity. While the Thoughts of others are just fluttering above the Ground, theirs are in the Third Heaven. While they are tuning their Souls and putting them in Frame, these are joyning in Hallelujahs with the Angels. In a Word, these who have attain'd to this happy Government of their Thoughts may be resembled to the *Wise Virgins who had* Mat. 25. 1.

their Lamps burning, and entred in with the Bridegroom to the Marriage, whileſt the Fooliſh Virgins were but trimming of theirs; ſo great is the advantage which they have above other Chriſtians.

Fourthly, The advantage of this great Duty of well Governing our Thoughts is great upon this account alſo, *viz.* Becauſe nothing ſo much conduceth to *quiet* the Thoughts, and *Compoſe* the Mind, as this doth. The greateſt part of our trouble and perturbation proceeds from want of a due care of, and Watchfulneſs over our Thoughts. And many times our troubles are ſo great that they convince us of IV.

the abſolute neceſſity of this Duty; becauſe then we find that nothing elſe can give us eaſe under them, or quiet our Spirits. Now Peace and tranquility of mind is a very conſiderable help to Religion. When a man's *Soul* & *Thoughts* are quiet, he goes ſmoothly on, ſeems to enjoy *that glorious liberty of the Sons of God*, which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of. He hath a true reliſh of the Sweets of Religion; his Soul is dilated and enlarged, and he is able *to run the ways of God's Commandments*. Whereas there is but a ſlender furtherance in *good*, but ſmall improvements, when the thoughts are hurried, the imaginations tumultuary, and

Rom. 8. 21.

and the Soul in an unhappy disorder, by any domineering and contrary Lusts, or any other cause. The Soul of any Wicked Man is meer ἀταξία, disorder and confusion, and all the Powers and Faculties of his Mind are as it were up in Arms against each other. *There is no Peace*, there cannot be, but all is mis-rule and uproar. And could we but behold it with our Corporeal Eyes, never such a confused Scene as that is represented it self to our View. 'Tis an Emblem of Hell it self. He can scarcely enjoy the benefit of one Calm and Sedate Thought. Lust, Anger, Revenge, Ambition, and a thousand more, would every Isa. 48.

one of them be Kings, and Usurp Supremacy; and therefore, *War in, and against the Soul.* Reason, who is the Rightful Soveraign, hath the least share in this Polity. Rebellious Slaves Aspire to the Throne, and boldly prescribe to their Prince, the Fundamental Laws of Nature, are Subverted, and all become most deplorably Ruinous and Confused. Whereas the Soul of a good Man, and one that is diligent in the well Governing of his Thoughts, is most quiet, peaceable, and Composed. All his Thoughts and Faculties are in good order, and then he is fit for any thing, and can do his Duty with far more

1 Pet. 2. 11.

more eaſe than others can. The preſent Harmony and Peace of his Mind, renders him capable of effectually minding *the things which belong to his everlaſting Peace.* In a Word, the Advantage of this happy governing our Thoughts is ſo great, that we can hardly perform any thing that is acceptable to God without it; in ſome meaſures. We cannot be eaſie to our ſelves, or ſerviceable to others, we can neither mind the buſineſs of our General, nor Particular Callings as we ought without it. But he that is ſo happy as to have attain'd a Command and dominion over his Thoughts, does and ſuffers every thing well.

He Acts with Conſcience, ſuffers with Patience. He Acts with Vigour, ſuffers with Courage. He does his Duty with half that difficulty, and endures Afflictions with leſs diſorder than others do, or can. And having approved himſelf to God, by an Internal and Spiritual obedience; by *truth in his inward parts*; by the Subjection of his very thoughts, to his moſt pure and holy Law: He ſhall at the laſt and dreadful day of Judgment be able to look up with joy and comfort to the eternal Judge and Searcher of all hearts. And when the Secrets of all Mankind ſhall be diſcloſed, all the hidden things of

Pſal. 51. 6.

of darkneſs, all the Myſteries of ungodlineſs: when all the clandeſtine Impurities of the Hearts and Souls of the whole World ſhall be revealed and publiſhed; then ſhall he glory in his Sincerity, and the purity of his thoughts, and the honeſty of his Intentions. Then ſhall he avoid that everlaſting ſhame, which ſhall confound the Minds, and cover the faces of the wicked and ungodly, the *Phariſaical* profeſſors, and the crafty Hypocrites; when all the ſecret filth of their hearts, thoughts, and imaginations ſhall be expoſed to the view of Angels and Men, and thrown back in their Faces. When the gaudy diſguiſe ſhall

be

be taken off, and Sinners appear to be what they really are. Which is a moſt aſtoniſhing conſideration, and ſuch as ſhould awaken us all to the utmoſt diligence and watchfulneſs in the well-governing our thoughts.

Having thus briefly ſhewn you the great benefit and advantage of well-governing our thoughts (which deſerv'd to be much more largely handled; but that I would not burden your thoughts while I am attempting to inſtruct you how to govern them:) I proceed to diſcourſe on the third thing laid down.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

I Come now in the next place to ſhew, *That evil thoughts ariſe out of the heart, and proceed from thence; which lays an Obligation on us of reſtraining and governing them; and how far we are able ſo to do.* Our Saviour here aſſures us, that *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.* The heart (*i.e.* the Soul, of man is a ſink of Corruption and Uncleanneſs. 'Tis deſperately wicked. 'Tis *Pandora's* box, which lets fly innumerable Plagues and Miſchiefs. 'Tis *naturally* the *Source* of wickedneſs. And let a Man

hat

but look into himſelf, and ſurvey his own Heart, he will ſee the greateſt cauſe to bewail his corruptions and find that there is nothing more deſerves his complaints, and tears, than his own heart. What a peſt? what an Enemy doth he always carry about with him? *'Tis not an open enemy, but a familiar friend that doth him the greateſt hurt, and diſhonour.* The ſnake is lurking in his own breaſt; and while he is looking and gazing abroad; this moſt perfidious and deadly foe is a domeſtick one. His own heart is the worſt of traytors to him, and the moſt implacable enemy that he hath, cannot do him half that miſ-

chief

chief which he receives from himſelf. 'Tis upon this account [Saint *Paul* exclaims, *O wretched man that I am!* Rom. 7. 24. —— And *David*, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right ſpirit within me! Create in me*— Pſal. 51. 10. 'Tis a work of omnipotence; and that God alone who made the Worlds, and raiſed all things out of nothing, can renew the heart, and purify the Soul from its natural filth and corruption. 'Tis the holy Spirit is that *Fire* that Acts 2. 3. muſt purge and refine the droſſy maſs. The divine Grace alone can reſtore health and vigour to the corrupt, depraved, degenerous heart of Man. And that will never be wanting to our

our ſincere endeavours. It will operate *with* our Endeavours, but not *without* them. Something is in our power, in order to it; and let us do that, and the reſt the Grace of God will ſupply. And one of the greateſt incentives to make us uſe our utmoſt endeavours, is, the ſerious conſideration of the ſinfulneſs and corruption of our own heart. 'Tis neceſſary therefore that we do not take a *ſlight* and *tranſient* view only; but be engaged in a deep and *accurate* inveſtigation of our ſelves. Search every corner of that cell, every receſs of that Labyrinth, with as much
Exod. 12. earneſtneſs as the *Jews* did for leven. And upon an impar-

tial

tial view, we ſhall find our Lord's words verified; *Out of the heart proceed all evil thoughts.* No good, properly ſo called, proceeds from thence, but what is the Effect of the Operations of the Bleſſed Spirit of God. 'Tis not the Natural iſſue of the Soul, but the Product of His Heavenly Inſpirations, who is continually ſtriving with Man, and endeavouring to Conſecrate and Hallow all his Thoughts and Affections, that ſo he may be acceptable to God. Every good Thought, every Religious Flight or Sacred Deſire is ſtirred up by Him; is His immediate Suggeſtion, who is Wreſtling with the ſtub-

ſtubborn and rebellious Powers of our ſouls, and with our impure imaginations, to reduce them into their proper order and condition. Or elſe 'tis the whiſper of ſome good Angel commiſſioned by him, who is willing to perform a Godlike act of charity to us, that we may raiſe up our minds to their proper object; and lends us wings to mount up to the higheſt Heaven withall. For the heart of Man *naturally* is full of evil, and out of it proceed all kind of wicked thoughts, and vain imaginations. It diſembogues ſuch impure ſteams and contagious exhalations, as blaſt and infect the whole World. 'Tis an

Aſpha-

Asphalites, a dead sea, which sends up most noxious vapours. 'Tis from the *heart* that all the evil in the world originally proceeds: and therefore 'tis a most natural piece of Advice, that whenever we behold any evil in any part, or instance of the whole Creation, we presently lay our hand upon our breast, look into our selves, and examine our own heart. 'Tis folly to lay the blame upon this and that, and t'other thing, when we should trace the evil to its Fountain-head. 'Tis most true that all the vile and sinful thoughts; the basest, and most abominable lusts proceed from the heart: But when they are bred out

of the corruption, and putrefaction of the heart it self, and when cast into it by the *Devil*, 'tis not so easy to determine. The accursed Enemy of our souls doth (no doubt) lay hold on all opportunities to cast into our minds wicked thoughts; and is very watchful of the times and seasons, when to corrupt and debauch our souls, and make them yet more vile than *naturally* they are. And therefore these wicked thoughts which many timerous souls imagine to be their own, may be rationally presumed to be his. There are indeed some marks which probably may serve to distinguish the *Devil's* injections, from our own cogitations.

gitations. As when they are monſtrouſly prophane and blaſphemous: when they aſſault us all of a ſudden with a tempeſtuous vehemence, filling us with terrour and amazement. Or elſe when they are ſuch thoughts as contradict all the intereſts of Humane Nature; as when a Man thinks of murdering and deſtroying himſelf. Such a thought cannot well be ſuppoſed to be the iſſue of the heart it ſelf, tho very corrupt, but rather thrown in by the *Devil*, *Who was a murderer from the beginning*. But (I ſay) as to the greater part of evil thoughts, it is no eaſy matter to know which are our own, or which are the *Devil*'s. As

for thoſe that are the immediate reſult of the heart, the *Devil* is very quick and ready to improve them. And for theſe, which are the *Devil's* injections, our corrupt hearts are too willing to comply with them: ſo that we muſt think our ſelves equally obliged to guard our ſelves againſt the one, and the other. And there is *ſomething* unqueſtionably in our power in order to it. We can do *ſomething* towards it; unleſs we will look upon our ſelves as Machines, and ſo deſtroy both Reaſon and Religion at once. I will agree that by an hypochondriack, or ſome other diſeaſe; or by a long ſeries and habit of ſinning

ning, which is a diſeaſe more inveterate, and harder to be cured, that the Oeconomy of the Soul and Spirits may be ſo broken and ſhattered, that the power of thinking, is become very weak and impaired; and that the laſſitudes of the Soul are as great almoſt as thoſe of the Body. But yet I think there are few caſes, but a man can do ſomething in order to a regular thinking. Few men are arrived to ſo great a degree of either, as to be able to do nothing towards it: tho it muſt be granted ſome can do much more than others. Our bleſſed Lord, when he was upon Earth, did not give uſeleſs Deſcriptions of things,

and deal with Men otherwiſe than rational Creatures. And therefore I cannot but ſuppoſe that when he ſhews them that out of *the heart proceed evil thoughts*, 'twas to this end that they ſhould endeavour to govern and ſubdue them.

Now we may lay down this as a certain Truth, (*viz.*) that evil Thoughts whatſoever they be, do not endanger our Eternal Salvation further than we comply with them. They are not our Sins further than we indulge them. But totally to hinder them I think is a thing Impracticable. It is impoſſible *but that ſuch offences will come.* And I believe the Holieſt Men find it ſo, ſo long

long as they are in a World where there are ſo many Objects; and in a State where there are ſo many Imperfections. But yet when wicked Thoughts ariſe in our Minds, we may certainly chooſe whether we will harbour and embrace them or not. This we may do, as long as we have any Liberty of Will left: ſo much is unqueſtionably in our power. Though 'tis confeſſed they will make frequent returns upon us, and every now and then with great importunity, preſent themſelves to us, tho but the laſt Moment we thruſt them out. Like an importunate Creditor, or an Impertinent Gueſt, they

will obtrude themſelves upon us, do what we can, and if we tell them we have never ſo great and weighty buſineſs, they will ſtill be troubleſome and haunt us, while we are actually ingaged in it. Nay, will purſue us even to the Sanctuary; and aſſault us at the Altar of God. Yet if we as often truſt them out as they return, they will never be charged upon us. For 'tis a giving them encouragement, and a compliance with them, that makes us Criminal. Then alone Thoughts will be imputed to us as our Sins, when we are pleaſed with them, or when we do not abominate and caſt them out as ſoon as they

they come into our Minds; as ſoon as we have Power to diſcover that they are ſinful. 'Tis true the Devil may continue to diſquiet and diſturb the Peace and Tranquility of our Conſciences, by his wicked injections, and putting into our Minds evil Thoughts: But tho they are our grief and moleſtation, yet they (being reſiſted) are his Sins; and God will judge him for them, and ſpare and pitty us. *God knows whereof we are made, and Remembreth that we are but duſt.* The Bleſſed Jeſus Aſſum'd our Nature, and therefore, well knows how to compaſſionate us in ſuch circumſtances. He was Himſelf Solli-

cited

Mat. 4. cited by the accurſed Tempter; but he did not yield to him, but reſiſted him; and if we follow our Lord's Example, and do ſo too; if he doth not preſently flee from us, yet 'tis not our ſin, but unhappineſs to be infeſted with him. And this certainly we are able to do: We may undoubtedly chooſe whether we will conſent to wicked thoughts, and aprove them, or not. If they do indeed meet with a kind entertainment at our hands, no wonder that they grow bold, and familiar: but if we deny them admittance, and ſhut them out, we ſhall at length be rid of them, or at leaſt they will not be chai-

charged upon us. Even the *Devil* is put to flight by reſiſtance, St. *James* tells us. He remembers his Apoſtacy; he trembles at the Name of *Jeſus*; and when a *Chriſtian* behaves himſelf bravely againſt him, he doth not care to abide the combat. If we give the ſame reply to all his ſuggeſtions as our Bleſſed Lord did: our trouble is greater than our danger. If we would but be watchful over our ſelves, and have as much care as we can of our thoughts, I am apt to think, we ſhould not complain ſo much of them, as we often do. 'Tis much for want of a due obſervation of our ſelves, and keep-

James 4. 7.

keeping our hearts with all diligence, that ſo many evil thoughts proceed from thence. The malignity, or folly of our Imaginations is much owing to our ſelves; to our own ſloth, and careleſsneſs; to idleneſs, or to an habit of ſin, or ſome ſuch cauſe; and when it is ſo, we ought to repent of them, and look on them as our ſins. Tho the corruption of our Nature, and the malice of the *Devil*, be many times the cauſe of them, yet we our ſelves are often more chargeable with them, than either of theſe; and if we narrowly and truly examine our ſelves, we ſhall find it ſo.

Upon

Upon the whole, it is sufficiently plain, that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts; the Soul is the Soil where this *Hemlock* is sown. There wicked thoughts are conceived; they owe their original either to the corruption of the Soul it self, or are thrown in by the instigations of the *Devil*. From thence they proceed; and therefore it must be acknowledg'd that there doth lie an obligation on us of well governing them. That we are not altogether unable to do any thing in order to it, but something is in our power. We can chuse whether we will cherish them or not; we can either bid them welcome, or bid them be gone. And

And besides we can use other helps and assistances, and follow these Rules and Directions, which are necessary to the well-governing our thoughts. And what they are, is the subject of the following Chapter.

CHAP. IV.

THe Rules and Directions which we are to follow, in order to the better performance of this great work (*viz.*) the vertuous and religious government of our thoughts, are divided into

General,
and Particular.

The

The General will have relation to all kinds of evil thoughts, whatsoever they be. The latter will concern chiefly these sorts of them hereafter mentioned.

The General Rules and Directions then are these following.

First Prayer. Constant and fervent Prayer. This is a *Catholicon*, a sovereign Remedy for every Ail, and Indisposition of the Soul. It is very *powerful* with God, *and availeth much*. 'Tis a preservative from the violence of Temptations, and a defence against all kinds of evil thoughts. Prayer, as it engageth the Divine Favour, and the Protection of Al- I. Gen. 32. 24. James 5. 16.

Almighty God in all cases: so it naturally cleanseth and purifieth the heart; keeps it in a due frame, and religious temper. The Soul is thereby prompted and disposed to that which is good, and ponderates towards God. It gives a relish of Divine and Spiritual things, and makes the Soul more and more averse to all evil, vain, or silly thoughts and imaginations. And therefore if we desire to be preserved from wicked thoughts, to keep our hearts in due temper, and government; we should be constant and earnest in our approaches to the Throne of Grace daily; and fervent in our Prayers to God for his

Grace,

Grace, to assist us in conquering the stubbornness, and irregularity of our thoughts and imaginations. That he would be pleas'd to take possession of our Souls by his holy Spirit; and by him to govern, subdue, and sanctify all the motions, powers, and faculties of our Souls. That no unclean Spirit may inhabit there; but that they may be *swept and garnished* in the best sence, and ever prepar'd to receive the visits of Heaven, and the benign influences of the holy Ghost.

Be sure then that you omit not the observance of this first *Rule*, in order to the well-governing your thoughts; for

without this, all the reſt will ſignify nothing.

II. Secondly, the next Rule is that you avoid idleneſs: That hateful vice, which makes the Soul of a Man like *the field of the ſluggard, all overgrown with thorns and briars:* full of all manner of wanton deſires, evil motions, and impure thoughts. When a Man is idle and loytering, a thouſand ill things come into his mind, which an honeſt induſtry would prevent. And the moſt deſirable opportunity the *Devil* hath for injecting wicked thoughts, or temptations ſucceſsfully, is when a Man hath nothing to do. It is abſolutely neceſſary therefore that we avoid being idle;

Prov. 24. 30, 30.

idle; and ſo practice both parts of our Bleſſed Saviour's Advice: *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* Mar. 26. 41. Idleneſs is the nurſe of wickedneſs, Sin's procurer; a vice moſt odious in its ſelf, and leading into all others. It lays a Man open to all aſſaults, and temptations; and expoſeth him to the dangerous ſollicitations of a legion of the Infernal Spirits at once. Whereas an induſtrious Man puts Satan to the toil of a long ſiege, as it were: the negligent and idle Perſon makes a preſent, and voluntary ſurrender of himſelf to him. Thus much is ſignify'd by that Parable of our Bleſſed Lord's

(*Mat.* 12. 43.) *When the unclean ſpirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, ſeeking reſt; and finding none, he ſaith, I will return into my houſe, from whence I came out: and when he is come, he findeth it empty, ſwept and garniſhed. Then goeth he, and taketh with himſelf ſeven other ſpirits more wicked than himſelf, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the laſt ſtate of that man is worſe than the firſt.* 'Tis not ſo eaſy to root up filthy weeds that have once taken root in any ground, as it is to prevent their being ſown. Neither is it ſo eaſy to eradicate wicked thoughts, as it is to prevent them. Upon which account

it

it is very neceſſary that we avoid this ſin of Idleneſs, which is a ſoil barren in every thing, but the noiſom weeds of evil thoughts, and unclean imaginations. 'Twas for want of better imployment that *David*'s heart was polluted with impure thoughts, and wanton deſires of *Bathſheba*; which coſt him ſo much woe, ſuch ſorrowful cries, and bitter lamentations; and cauſed that remarkable tragedy of *Uriah*, which we find (2 *Sam.* 12. 9, 10, *&c.*) A ſluggard is not only infamous among Men; but God, and Angels look on him, as an uſeleſs and unprofitable wretch. He ſeems as if he were *heterogenous* to the

whole Creation; every part of which (that ought) is active and in motion: The *Sun*, *Moon*, and *Stars*, in their rapid courſe, and all the moving
Pſal. 19. 1. *Heavens declare the glory of God, and even the firmament ſheweth his handy work.* They are all uſeful, and anſwer the end of their Beings, even things that are immoveable. But the idle and ſlothful Perſon, doth not anſwer the end of his Being, but is continually upbraided by them. And while almoſt every Being is buſy, and in action, he alone lyes ſtretch'd along the ground, and ſleeping away his golden days; or elſe tugging under the weight of ſtudying and contriving

triving how to ſpend them. When I ſee the Picture of *Atlas*, with every muſcle extended, and labouring under the ponderous Globe of Heaven upon his ſhoulders; I cannot forbear to think upon an idle Perſon, whoſe greateſt burden is Time, and ſucceeding Hours, Days, and Years, are a continuation of his Slavery. Or elſe I repreſent him to my ſelf, as a Man encompaſſed with a croud of *Devils*, who make him the ſport, and paſtime of all their accurſed aſſaults, and temptations; and do with him as they pleaſe. 'Tis certain that there is no Man ſafe that is idle: he is not only expos'd to every evil thought, but to

the worſt actions; and he had better be in the midſt of a Battel, ſurrounded with his Enemies, than to be ſo extravagantly at leiſure, and unimploy'd.

III. Thirdly, That which adminiſters to evil thoughts as much as any thing, is bad company. As 'tis the great advantage of good Converſation to prompt Men to Vertue, to enoble their Minds, and to excite in them a pious and laudable emulation: So 'tis the great miſchief of bad Company, and wicked Society, to infect and debauch the Mind, and pollute the Thoughts. Experience infallibly teacheth us, that when we hear any lewd

or profane Diſcourſe, or ſee any baſe or indecent Actions, we are too apt to repeat the evil in our Thoughts; and it is well if it proceed no further. The holy Apoſtle tells us, *That evil communications corrupt good manners:* Vice is ſtrangely recommended, and inſenſibly inſinuates it ſelf, in wicked Converſation. And the ſame Apoſtle exhorts, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter Grace unto the hearers.* Religious Converſation, good Diſcourſe, greatly enlivens the Soul, raiſes the Thoughts, and animates a Man againſt the force, and influence

1 Cor. 15. 33.

Epheſ. 4. 29.

of

of bad Examples. But ill Company is a dangerous and bewitching thing, and ſtrangely leſſens our Idea's of *God*, and Notions of Vertue; and tends to pollute and harden the Heart. Who can uſe to be in ſuch company, where the holy Name of *God* is blaſphemed, his Being queſtioned, and diſputed againſt: His Miniſters, his Word, his Law, reproached and abuſed? Who can accuſtom himſelf to the ſociety of theſe Men, whoſe ungovern'd Tongues talk of nothing but lewdneſs, and obſcenity; whoſe words, actions, and whole behaviour is ſcandalous, and immoral; or vain, frothy, and fooliſh; without being

being tainted therewith, and retaining the ungrateful savour of their ungodly conversation? Humane Nature is too corrupt, and prone to ill to come off unhurt. Nothing indeed so much conduceth to make the thoughts loose and wicked, as bad Company, which must therefore be diligently avoided, if we would preserve our Minds pure, and govern our Thoughts aright. Always therefore endeavour to keep such Company, as you may rise *by*, and not fall *with*. Such as may advance you in Holiness, enrich your Soul with Vertue; and not such as will debauch your Thoughts, and instill naughty cogitations into your Minds. Fourth-

IV. Fourthly, As we must abhor vicious Conversation, so we must avoid the reading any lewd or wicked Books; which treat of any vile and base subjects, or are any way apt to instill evil Thoughts, or Notions into us. There is hardly any thing more tends to debauch the Mind, than the Reading wicked Books; which is a sort of conversing, and as bad (or worse) as the former. If our Inclination, or business lie principally that way; there are abundant gratifications of that kind, besides Plays and Romances, which are less dangerous, and more improving. And these that understand the Rules of *Education*, will tell you,

you, that few Persons are co m petent readers of them, or ought to be allowed the liberty of meddling with them. The Advocates of the Theatre plead, that abundance of good Morality, and Vertuous Instruction, may be got by seeing, or reading a Play, or a Romance. But our own Experience doth evidently confute that Plea; and demonstrate, That the Minds of many have been debauched by them; and no doubt many Souls ruined; but few or none the better for them, in any particular. They are most contrary to the *Christian* Profession, and the main scope and design of them, is visibly such, as most tends to please

pleaſe the Fancies of lewd, or *Atheiſtical* Men; and inſtead of diſcouraging, recommending Vice to the utmoſt advantage; and improving all kinds of evil Thoughts, as much as any thing that can be mentioned.

No Man can be at a loſs in this Learned Age, for ſelect *Entertainments* of his mind in reading. The nauſeous ſtrains of a lewd, or *Atheiſtical* Poet, are not forc'd upon us by neceſſity, or a ſcarcity of Wit: But upon inquiry, I believe it will (at leaſt generally) be found that the moſt lovely, and charming ſtile, the moſt lofty and affecting Language goes along with the moſt uſeful and beneficial ſubjects. The

The Book of *God*, the holy Scriptures, affords greater variety of Elegance, Delight, and Advantage, than all the Writings in the World. And there is no man that rightly understands the Scriptures, but muſt eſteem it a moſt bleſſed, and perfective thing, *To delight in the law of the Lord, and in that law to exerciſe himſelf day and night.* What ſublime and lofty *Theorems!* what uſeful things, and abſolutely neceſſary to the eternal Happineſs, and Salvation of our Souls, do we meet with in the Sacred Volume! *There* we are entertain'd with the Hiſtory of the *Creation* of Man, and the beginning of this viſible World. *There* we are Pſal. 119.

in-

inform'd of the Methods and Disposations of the Almighty towards Mankind; and by what Steps, and Advances his *Church* through all Ages, grew to be what it is now. *There* God hath been pleased more clearly to reveal Himself, than any where besides. *There* we have the great Mystery of Divine Love, in the *Redemption* of the World by *Christ Jesus*, our Lord, made known to us. The excellencies of *Piety*, and *Vertue* describ'd in the most affecting Language. The truest Perfection, and the extremest Misery of Man, explain'd. Rules for obtaining eternal Life, and Blessedness laid down, and most gracious Promises,

miſes, and unſpeakable Rewards to encourage us in our Endeavours after it. All which things, *Even the Angels deſire to look into*, and admire the Divine Goodneſs, which impregnates all. And if we would but make this Word of *God* our Study, and be diligently converſant in reading the Scriptures, we ſhould more and more be ſenſible, that there is no Book like this: and that an excellent Expedient to keep wicked Thoughts out of our Hearts, would be to read the Scriptures much, and often, with meekneſs, Prayer, and attention: inſtead of theſe vain, fooliſh, and unprofitable, or elſe profane, wicked, or ob-

ſcene Writings of ſuch as call themſelves the *Wits* of the Age.

The Mind of Man is combuſtible; the Thoughts of his Heart are meer tinder to the ſparks of an obſcene Saying, a lewd fancy, or but ſo much as an impure hint. And therefore I am apt to think that few Men in the World (how ſtrong ſoever their prejudices may be, or how much ſoever they may preſume upon their own ſtrength) are able to govern their Thoughts well, without they have a ſpecial regard to this Rule, and Admonition alſo.

V. Another Rule, which is proper for the well-governing of our Thoughts in general, is, Frequent *Self-examination.*

With-

Without often looking into our ſelves, and examining our own propenſions, and inclinations; and what is that *Sin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us*; it is hardly to be imagined how we ſhould be able to govern our Thoughts aright. There is nothing which a man is more a ſtranger to, than *himſelf*, tho' there is nothing in which he ought to be more skill'd: and that is one great reaſon of the irregularity of his Thoughts. For without we well conſult our own temper and conſtitution, and what the *lædentia* and *juvantia* are; and narrowly obſerve the tendency of our Paſſions, and the frame and diſpoſition of

our Souls, we cannot conquer our Thoughts. 'Tis impoſſible, unleſs we *know* our ſelves, that we ſhould *govern* our ſelves. Sometimes a man's evil Thoughts may run chiefly upon luſt, and uncleanneſs; and ſometimes covetouſneſs may be his darling ſin. Sometimes ambition may be his dotage; and at other other times revenge his favourite. Now how can it be imagined that a perſon can govern, and ſubdue his Thoughts, as to any of theſe, without a frequent inquiring into his own Soul, and accurate knowledge of himſelf? Nay, which way can a man be convinc'd, and perſwaded of the great evil and

ſin-

ſinfulneſs of wicked Thoughts, without *Self-examination*? How can he be made truly ſenſible of their pernicious and polluting nature, and that they are ſo highly diſpleaſing to *God*, as they are, without a diligent ſearch into himſelf? or how can he be poſſeſſed that it is his duty to reſtrain, and exerciſe a government over his Thoughts; and that much is in his own power, in order to it? I ſay, how can a perſon be rightly ſenſible of any of theſe *neceſſary* things, without he frequenly, and skilfully practiſe this duty of *Self-examination*? which as it is of abſolute uſe, in order to Religion in general; ſo it is to this part

of it, especially (*viz.*) the well-governing our Thoughts. Besides,

How many men are too apt to imagine, that as for Thoughts, they shall never be laid to our charge, so long as they don't break out into actions? That the *Theory* of sin shall pass, without the least notice of the Almighty Judge; and that only the *Practise* of it shall be observ'd, and censur'd. That as for Thoughts, they are either in the Nature of these ἀδύνατα, Impossibilities, which cannot be brought under any good Order, or Government, in regard of their infiniteness, and variety; and so they claim a privilege of in-

invincible *Liberty*, becauſe they can't be ſubdu'd: or elſe that they are ſuch ſlight and ſmall eſcapes, as that they carry their paſport, and pardon with them; that they ſhall never be puniſh'd, and that therefore they are no ſins. And that alſo becauſe the Law of man takes no hold of them; and becauſe *likewiſe* it is impoſſible altogether to avoid theſe thoughts, as was ſaid before. Certainly (ſay they) we ſhall never be call'd to account for our thoughts, becauſe they come oftentimes ſo ſuddenly, and unexpectedly, that no reaſon can be given of them: And they do no body any hurt; what evil therefore ſhould

there be in them? why ſhould we be accountable for them? This is indeed the common ſtrain of the civil, honeſt, moral Man; (as he calls himſelf) and the formal Hypocrite, to draw *near unto God with his lips, when his heart is far from him*; to be under no concern for his Thoughts, but only to take care with the *Harlot*, to wipe his mouth clean: And with *Pontius Pilate*, to waſh his hands; and with the Scribes and Phariſees to cleanſe only *the outſide of the cup, or the platter.* This is all the Religion of too many, who make it to conſiſt in *Sence*, and not in the *Heart*, as if the deſign of it were to be not the *Reformation* of

the

the inward, but an *Accompliſhment* of the outward Man. As if indeed *Chriſtianity* were no more than a meer *Complement*. And now what is the true cauſe of this? what is the reaſon of ſuch dangerous errours, and miſtakes about our Thoughts; as that they are free, ſinleſs, and unpuniſhable? I ſay, what is the cauſe of all this, but ignorance of our own ſelves; ignorance of the ſad and prevailing *Corruptions* of our Nature, and their greedy propenſities, and inclinations to evil? and ignorance of the Law of *God* too; which if we would look into, it would plainly ſhew us the deteſtable ſinfulneſs of Thoughts: and

that

that the main end of *Religion* is an internal change, and purification of the Heart and Soul; of all the Thoughts and Imaginations. And now an excellent means to dispel this Ignorance, is this Rule which I am pressing you to the observance of (*viz.*) *Self-examination*. Without which it will be an impossible thing to attain a right government of our Thoughts in general.

VI. This Rules must also be followed with another, if we would govern our Thoughts aright. And that is that you make a covenant with your Eyes, and other Sences; keeping them from carnal or unlawful objects; or not letting them

them dwell upon them. This will be a very proper means in order to that great end, which is the ſcope of this Treatiſe.

There is no preſerving a Caſtle or Fortreſs from being taken by the enemy, but by having a ſpecial care of the Avenues, and Breaches. Now the Sences are, as it were, the *Avenues* of the Soul, the Inlets of all evil into the Mind: and therefore there is a neceſſity that we keep a ſtrict watch over our Sences, if we would have our Thoughts pure and unpolluted. For there is not a Sence that we have, but may betray and ruin us. An Eye, an Hand, *&c.* may prove our ut-

utter destruction. As that Advice of our Blessed *Lord* implies, *Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: It is better for thee to enter into Life, halt and maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into Life with one Eye, rather than having two Eyes to be cast into hell fire.* Our own Eyes may ruin us, as sure as these of a *Basilisk*; and 'tis *Our own Eye*, which puts witchcraft into that of others, and conveys back certain hurt, and mischief into our Thoughts and

Mat. 18. 8.

Souls.

Souls. There are a great variety of enſnaring objects in the World, that preſent themſelves to us. The *World*, the *Fleſh*, and the *Devil*, conſpire how to entrap us. Which way ſoever we turn, we find ſome object or other to entice us. As the *Hermite* ſaw in his Viſion, the whole World is hung all over with Nets. The *Devil* well knows that the beſt way to ſubdue the *Spirit*, is by the *Fleſh*; and that there is no ſuch effectual way of conquering the Soul, as by firſt making his attacks upon the outworks, the *Sences*. And therefore he firſt endeavours to take *them*. 'Tis of abſolute neceſſity therefore that we keep a cloſe guard upon

upon every one of our *ſences*, if we would not be invaded by wicked thoughts. For any one of them left unguarded, may prove our ruine. And we muſt acknowledge that 'tis giving too great a liberty to our *ſences*, which is the occaſion of ſo many vile and wicked Thoughts filling our Minds.

VII. Again: In the next place, we are to take care, that if any evil Thoughts (of what kind ſoever they be) ariſe up in our Hearts, not to let them remain in us; but preſently to make reſiſtance againſt them; turning the Heart immediately to a contrary ſubject; humbling our Souls by ſpeedy repentance for the ſame. Let

not

not *vain thoughts lodge in us*, Jer. 4. 14. tho' they may *glance* upon us. 'Tis dwelling upon a wicked Thought, that makes it prevailing, and domineering over us. If we habitually indulge it, it will get ground of us; and at length grow obſtinate, and unruly; and much more difficult to be conquered. Whereas an immediate reſiſtance of it, would by degrees ſo weaken it, as 'tis probable we ſhould at length be quite rid of it. Tho' this may be thought a very *troubleſom*, yet it is as *likely* a way as any, of avoiding evil thoughts. When any wicked imagination therefore preſents it ſelf, the beſt way to repel it, would not be

to

to argue, and diſpute long with it; but to catch away our Minds from it preſently: and like a Man that accidentally treads upon an *Adder*, ſtarts back immediately, and ſtrives to make no more approaches to it again. It is poſſible, nay likely, that it will return upon you often in a little time; but do you labour as often as it doth ſo, to thruſt it out, and be not weary of ſo doing. And becauſe this is not ſo eaſy a matter neither, (tho this or nothing muſt be granted to be in our power) it would be expedient, in order to the diverting our Minds effectually, that we propoſe to our Minds ſome one or other of the moſt awful

ſub-

ſubjects; and ſuch as is apt more than ordinarily to take up, and fix our Thoughts. As for Inſtance: The *Crucifixion* of our Saviour *Chriſt*: imagining that we ſaw his *tortured* Body bleeding upon the Croſs; and heard the *doleful* cries which he uttered, when he made the great Attonement, and Satisfaction for the ſins of the World; and beheld the *portentous* Eclipſe, the *Præternatural* Darkneſs, the *Renting* of the Rocks, theopening of the Graves, and the reſt of the *Tremendous* Circumſtances which attended the death of the *Son of God*. Or elſe, let it be the laſt *Judgement*, and the *Miſcellaneous* horrour and

exultation of that dreadful day:
2 Pet. 3. 12. *Wherein the heavens being on fire, ſhall be diſſolved, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat:* Acts 2. 20. *The ſun be turned into darkneſs, and the moon into blood;* Mat. 24. 29. *the powers of heaven be ſhaken, and the ſtars fall from their orbs:* all this viſible World be conſum'd and ingulph'd, in an inconceivable eternity of *happineſs* to the righteous, but of *torment* to the wicked. Any one of ſuch ſubjects as theſe would be very proper to fix our Minds upon, in order to keep them from returning to ill things. There is nothing can more *awe* the Soul, *collect* the Thoughts, and *compoſe* the Spirits, than thinking on ſuch ſub-

ſubjects. They are things ſo very *conſiderable*, that while we are imploying our Minds about them, it is an hard matter to think of any thing elſe, or ſoon to be drawn aſide, to any other object. And therefore it is very adviſable, that we make uſe of this expedient, in order to the well-governing our Thoughts. To which end alſo,

VIII. Let us be careful to watch over our Thoughts on the *Lords-day*; then more eſpecially than at other times. The *Lords-day* is (I know not by what means) extremely ſlighted, and diſregarded. And under a pretence of *Chriſtian Liberty*, profaneneſs hath very

greatly advanced it ſelf. So that *God's own Day*, is become almoſt as one of ours, and but a very ſmall difference obſerv'd betwixt them. Men are generally ſo far from being moſt careful of their thoughts on that Holy-day, that they ſuffer them to be moſt *profuſe* and *extravagant* then; and not only their *Thoughts*, but their *Actions* too are for a great part *worſe* than at other times. Which, as it is a very great ſin in it ſelf, and ſuch as ſhall be ſeverely accounted for; ſo it is a great means of making our Thoughts looſe, ungovernable, and wicked at other times. For *that*, as it is a day peculiarly to be dedicated to *God*,

God, ſo it is a day wherein *God* deſigns in a more eminent manner to *communicate himſelf*, and his *Grace* to our Souls. And therefore if we do ſanctifie it as we ought, by having a ſtrict watch over our thoughts, and by the *delightful* exerciſes of Prayer, Praiſes, and Meditations, and a devout Reading, and Hearing the Word of *God*, *&c.* It will (by *God's* Bleſſing) leave ſuch an happy tincture on us, and ſo piouſly, and laſtingly incline the Mind to good, that it will be an excellent means to order our thoughts the better, when we have more liberty for the World. How inconſiderable ſoever this Rule may ſeem to

any; yet I doubt not but a great part of the vanity, and evil of our Thoughts and Imaginations, is owing to a careleſs, and remiſs obſervation of the *Lords-day*. Neither can I think, that that glorious Promiſe (any more than the Morality of the fourth Commandment) is ſtinted to the *Jewiſh* œconomy alone, tho' it may primarily concern that (*Iſa.* 58. 13, 14.) *If thou turn away thy foot from the ſabbath, from doing thy pleaſure on my holy day, and call the ſabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honourable, and ſhalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleaſure, nor ſpeaking thine own words: Then ſhalt thou delight*

light thy ſelf in the Lord; and I will cauſe thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy Father, for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.

Being watchful over our ſelves when we are *alone*, is another Rule, which we are to obſerve in order to the well governing of our Thoughts in general. *Solitude* is a ſeaſon when our Thoughts are very apt to rove, and then to light upon ill objects. When a Man is by himſelf, he is not ſecure from his ſpiritual enemies; and with reſpect to the multitude of vain, and evil Thoughts, that then are apt to come into his Mind, it may IX.

be truly ſaid of him, *Nunquam minus ſolus quam cum ſolus.* Upon which account it was that the *Devil* choſe *that* opportunity, to tempt our Saviour, when he was in the wilderneſs, alone. Becauſe he well knew that at ſuch a time as that, the Mind of Man being at *leiſure*, his Thoughts will be more *relaxed* and *wandring*, and ſo more eaſy to be won by his ſuggeſtions; and to comply with his Temptations. A *Monaſtick* Life doth not ſecure a Man from evil Thoughts; but in ſome ſort makes him the more obnoxious to them. The *Devil* will pay his unwelcome viſits to us in our *Privacy*, as well

Mar. 4.

as

as in *Converſation.* And the *Hermite* in his Cell, hath as much reaſon to look well to his thoughts, as he that is in the Croud of this World. And Therefore I take it to be very adviſable, that at any time, when we are *alone*, we ſuffer not our thoughts to ſcatter and flie at random: for unhappy conjunctions oftentimes prove the conſequence of ſuch erratical motions; but to confine them to ſome *certain* bounds, and *determinate* ſubjects. Such as the *Power* or *Goodneſs* of Almighty God, or the like; which will ſweetly imploy our thoughts, and refreſh our minds. And the more profitably to think on any ſuch ſub-

ſubject, we may when we are alone likewiſe think on our own *ſinfulneſs*; be *judging* our ſelves, *confeſſing* our ſins, and laying open our hearts before God, which will make the goodneſs of God more *illuſtrious*, and *admirable*; and alſo keep us from being aſſaulted with any dreadful, and terrifying thoughts, with any filthy and profligate thoughts; and our hearts from being deadn'd and ſtupify'd with *Mopiſhneſs*, and *drowſineſs*, &c. which at ſuch a time we are more eſpecially prone to.

X. Again: In the next place, let us be very careful to entertain the good motions of God's *Holy Spirit*, to obey his

his Heavenly Inſpirations; to bowe to his ſacred ſuggeſtions, when at any time we are bleſſed therewith. Every good thought ſhould be *made welcome*, and *cheriſh'd*, and *improv'd* by us; and by that means we ſhall not only avoid evil thoughts; but in time arrive at an happy temper and habit of *good thoughts*, which is one of the moſt deſirable things in the world; and moſt of all prepares the Soul for the purity, and raviſhment of the Contemplation, of God, and the Joys of *Heaven*. Let us therefore always *improve* every good thought or motion that comes into our Minds; and entertain it as an *Embaſſy* from God,

God, as a ſpark of the *Celeſtial fire*. And let us diligently attend, and liſten to the counſels and monitions of our own Conſciences; by no means reſiſt their checks, or ſtifle their Advertiſements. To draw to a Concluſion of this Chapter; If we would attain to this great Thing, *(viz.)* the due government of our Thoughts, let us be careful to preſerve our ſelves *innocent* and *harmleſs*; to do no hurt, or evil at any time, *willingly*. Let us make *Religion*, and the Fear of God our *Buſineſs*. Let us make uſe of God's wonderful Works, both of *Mercy* and *Judgment*, which at any time occur in the World, ſeaſoning

our

our Hearts with an Holy *Meditation* of them.

There are a great many more excellent *Rules*, in order to the *Well-governing* our Thoughts: As applying our ſelves to our proper *Teachers*, and *Spiritual Guides*, for comfort and Aſſiſtance, when our Hearts are oppreſſed with wicked Thoughts, or prevailing corruptions.

Avoiding unwarrantable *Curioſities*, and prying into hidden *Myſteries*, and unneceſſary Speculations.

Contentment, *Temperance*, *Humility*; *Truſt* and *Affiance* in God: and abundance more, which are in that large field of Diſcourſe, which ſuch a ſubject

as

as this affords: and which if I ſhould enlarge upon, as I have done on the former Heads, would ſwell this Treatiſe into a much bigger Book than I deſign'd it.

I ſhall therefore content my ſelf and the *Reader* with theſe *Principal Rules* and Directions, for the well-governing of the Thoughts in *general*, which have been treated of in the fore-going Pages. Which well put in practice, will, I doubt not (by the bleſſing of Almighty God) prove in a great meaſure effectual to the end deſign'd. And that, if we (not ſlightly and indifferently but) cloſely, and in earneſt apply our ſelves to them, we ſhall thereby pre-

vent

vent Evil Thoughts; and attain that happy and desirable Government over our selves, which either sloth, or ignorance makes some Men think to be *Eutopian* and impossible: Only adding this *one* particular more, which must by no means be pass'd over, and that is,

The deep and serious consideration of the last *Dreadful Judgment*. XI.

Consider seriously with your selves then, That there is a day a coming, when not only all the Actions, and more known passages of our Lives; but even our most *Private* and *Retired* Thoughts shall be accounted for. When God shall judge the

Rom. 2. 16. the *Secrets* of Men by *Chriſt Jeſus.* Tho' Men cannot ſee our Thoughts; yet an All-knowing God can, and doth; and will aſſuredly judge us for them. In that day, when theſe that have labour'd to approve themſelves unto God, by an *Internal* purity, and ſincere Obedience; not regarding the eye of the World, or the ſilly applauſes of mortal Men; but the favour of God, and *Conſcience* of their duty; ſhall be crown'd with eternal honours; and all their *ſecret* Piety be rewarded *openly*: And theſe that have hypocritically carried a fair outſide, and paſs'd for civil, honeſt, moral Men, whilſt *their inward parts were very wicked-*

wickedneſs, and their Hearts full of all uncleanneſs ſhall be laid open, and expos'd to the ſhame of all the World, and they baniſh'd from the preſence of God, into the flames of Hell for ever.

Man indeed judgeth of the Heart by the Works; but God judgeth of the Works by the Heart. Since therefore we muſt be call'd to an account for our Thoughts hereafter, let us carefully remember it: and ſo reckon with our ſelves for them in this, that we may not be judg'd for them in the World to come.

CHAP. V.

THE accurſed *Tempter* and Enemy of our Souls, is no doubt always buſy in ſuggeſting ill things to us, and caſting into our minds wicked thoughts. He is continually purſuing us into all places and companys, and preſenting before us alluring and inticing objects. He is too well experienc'd in this *Black Art*; too skilful an Engineer in laying his train. He very well knows the tempers and conſtitutions of Mankind; is acquainted with their *Predominant* inclinations and propenſities,

ſities, and ſo can ſuit his objects, and *proportionate* his *Devices*. *His name is Legion too:* For there are a multitude of them to carry on their *helliſh* deſigns, in ruining Souls, and corrupting Minds. Like the Plagues of *Egypt*, they even fill the *Atmoſphere*. Their numbers are like theſe of the *Locuſts*, *Flies*, and *Lice*, and *Frogs*, croaking even in Kings Chambers. And could we but ſee theſe *Swarms* of *Devils* that aſſault us, and are darting their Temptations at us, and continually injecting evil Thoughts into our Hearts; we ſhould be aſtoniſhed, and tremble at our danger: we ſhould ever be crying to God to help us; and

having a quick Eye upon all their aſſaults. Could we but behold theſe *Infernal* Enemies that encompaſs us; our concern for our ſelves could not be ſo ſmall, as to ſuffer us to be careleſs and negligent. The *Devils* are working, and contriving, and reſtleſs in their motions to deſtroy our Souls; and yet, alas! we are as ſecure as if we were embrac'd, and careſs'd by our deareſt Friends; as if we had no Enemy at all to fear. We have had ſome Hiſtorical accounts of Perſons that have been ſuch exquiſite villains, in the Art of Poiſoning, that they could convey the deadly Venom to the Vitals, and kill in a moment; or elſe

bring

bring on a lingring, but yet as certain death; and place the period of Life some Years off. As the *Javians*, and *Sumatrians*, by their poyson'd * *Crests*, and the *Chineses* by their *Nails*.

* *A* Crest is a *Dagger.*

The woful experience of several of our own Nation, as well as the common suffrage of all who have travelled into those parts, put the truth of this beyond the necessity of any particular authorities; tho' many such might be produc'd, were it not foreign to the present design.

But the *Devil* is an Artist more subtil even than these; he can convey a Spiritual Venom and Contagion to the Soul, and poyson all the Thoughts and Powers of it.

His injections are as quick, and as keen as Lightning. And he hath *undiſcernable* ways of defiling and corrupting our Minds. That *Satan* can throw wicked Thoughts into our Minds, is (I ſuppoſe) a matter not queſtioned: But whether he doth this by working on the humours of the Body, or ſtirring up the animal Spirits; or by an *immediate* applying his Suggeſtions to the Soul, is not ſo eaſy to be determin'd. There being a neceſſary Dependance of the Operations of the Soul, upon the Texture of the Body and Spirits; it is not improbable that he frequently injects wicked Thoughts *that* way. But why

may

may he not also cast in wicked Thoughts into our Hearts, by an *immediate* communication? The *truth* is, we cannot well find out which Method he takes in his Temptations. We are not able to tell *how* he casts in wicked Thoughts. We know little or nothing of the intercourse between Beings purely *Spiritual:* But too plain and true it is, that we are infested with a multitude of evil Thoughts, and that they do proceed out of the *Heart*, however they came there. And therefore it will be a more *material* enquiry how we shall be able effectually to resist, or prevent them. And this cannot be fully done neither in a Treatise

of this nature; becauſe their kinds are infinite, and their numbers endleſs. I ſhall therefore, according to my propos'd Method.

Conſider in this Chapter, ſome *ſpecial* kinds of evil Thoughts, and endeavour to apply remedies againſt them, to the ſatisfaction and benefit (I hope) of the ſerious *Reader*.

I. Firſt, Then the *firſt* kind of them which I ſhall conſider is, *Profane* and *Blaſphemous* Thoughts. And of this ſort there is a diſmal variety. I have known ſome (and theſe I'm perſwaded very religious) People, who have been extreamly diſturb'd with ſuch Thoughts concerning *GOD*,

as

as have been moſt unaccountable, and as abſurd, as they are profane.

If I thought fit, I could mention ſome of them, which have been ſo *extravagant*, that I ſhould think to be rid of them, it were better to *contemn* and *deſpiſe* them, than anxiouſly to be concern'd about them. Tho' with others of them, we ought to deal after a different manner. To think *aright* of Almighty God, and to have ſuch *Ideas* of him in our Minds as are *worthy*, and *becoming* ſo great and ſo pure a Majeſty; is not only a very conſiderable part of *Religion*, but a very *comfortable* thing. And I cannot but pity ſuch

Chri-

Chriſtians as are much afflicted with profane thoughts. Of this kind of Evil thoughts there are ſome more *hideous* than others; but yet every thought of him, which is contrary or unſuitable to that repreſentation, which by ſuch and ſuch glorious Attributes he hath made to us of Himſelf in his holy Word, *that* I call a *profane Thought:* or when we conceive of Almighty God under ſome groſs form, or material ſhape; or entertain any vile, mean, or indeed any but the *Higheſt* conceptions, that we are able of him. *God* is in himſelf an Infinite, Almighty, and Incomprehenſible Spirit. And tho' he hath ſometimes in the Scri-

Scriptures deſcrib'd, and repreſented himſelf to us by material figures, or ſenſible objects; yet we are not to think that he is really ſuch as he is deſcrib'd, but that he condeſcends to our capacity by ſuch a Style and Language. And any other Method of inſtructing us in the nature of himſelf, would not be ſo *Intelligible* to us. God uſeth this, as an eaſy and familiar way of teaching us to know him: without which our Notions of him would be very obſcure, and we could know but little of him. And therefore I cannot but wonder at the imprudence and *Luciferian* pride of ſuch Men, who deny all Myſteries, and pretend to know

know *GOD* ſo, as *perfectly* to comprehend him, by the dim light of Natural Reaſon, alone.

Thus is *GOD* repreſented to us ſometimes as having Hands, Feet, Eyes, and ſuch like organical parts. Not that he hath truly ſuch; (as the old Hereticks, the *Anthropomorphites* held, and the *Romaniſts* now depict him) but we are to underſtand them in a figurative ſence. His *Hands* and his *Feet*, betoken his *Power*; his *Eyes* his *Knowledge*, and *Favour*, *&c.* And therefore to think of him under any material figure, is a profane thought, and muſt by no means be encourag'd. So alſo to think that *God* is a *Liar*,

or

or *Unmerciful*, or *Unjuſt*, &c. is a blaſphemous thought. And indeed, (as I ſaid) every thought that is formed in our Minds, which is unſuitable to his Eternity, Authority, Purity, and Holineſs, or any other of his glorious Attributes, is reducible to this firſt kind of evil thoughts. Now tho' theſe are very *dreadful* thoughts; yet they may ſometimes come into our Minds thro' the *Devil*'s ſubtilty, and our own *careleſsneſs*. Nay, 'tis poſſible that they may infeſt the Minds of *good* Men, and that too, when they are about the *Higheſt* Imployments; which may for the preſent ſerve to ſatisfy theſe poor Souls, who

are

are at any time terrify'd, and affrighted with a Sence of them, and take off from that *horrour* that they are apt to conceive in their Minds upon the account of them.

Now the Directions which I would recommend in order to our avoiding any profane and blaſpemous thoughts, are theſe following.

I. Firſt, That we be ſure to avoid an *habit of any known ſin*, than which there is nothing more miniſters to profane and blaſphemous thoughts. For an habit of any known ſin, will ſtrangely degrade our thoughts, and leſſen our *Ideas* of GOD. It being an impoſſible thing for any Man to ar-

arrive at an habit of wilful and deliberate ſinning, without frequent grapplings with his own Conſcience, and iterated reſiſtances of its checks, and convictions; without thinking falſly or meanly of GOD; or elſe putting him quite out of his thoughts, *And his judgments far above out of his ſight:* No wonder that by continuing ſo to do, he comes at laſt to have *profane* or *blaſphemous* thoughts of him.

GOD is an infinite and eternal Spirit, and the moſt *abſolute* Being, and *tranſcendency* above the *higheſt* of our thoughts. And if ever we would think rightly and worthily of him, we muſt habituate

tuate our selves to think much upon him, and let our thoughts of him be according to these representations and discoveries, which he hath been pleas'd to make of himself in the *Scriptures*. Our Natural Reason, tho' it will yield us some knowledge of a God, yet it is not a *sufficient* guide to direct our thoughts concerning him; for it will many times lead us into false notions of him; as appears beyond all dispute from the Worship of the Gentile World, and also the *Heterodox* opinions of these who rely thereon. And how is it possible for any habitual sinner, who must, and doth, thrust God out of his thoughts on pur-

purpoſe, that he may ſin with the greater liberty and delight, ever do this? He cannot grow to an *Habitual* Sinner, without he quite baniſheth the thoughts of a God from his Heart; and that ſuch an one ſhould be able to think of him after a due manner, what is it leſs than a contradiction? And then no wonder if by ſo frequently ſlighting God in his own mind, he comes at length to think *prophanely* and *blaſphemouſly* of him. Irreverent Thoughts of God grow ſtill more and more wicked; and a continual diſreſpect of him, ends at length in *Atheiſm* it ſelf. He then that is haunted, and peſtered with ſuch Thoughts as theſe, we

are ſpeaking of, may perhaps upon a deep enquiry, find cauſe to condemn himſelf, of ſome *Habit of ſin*; and if ſo, he muſt labour to mortify it, and become a New Man, if ever he would avoid this kind of evil Thoughts.

II. Secondly, *Too curious and bold Speculations*, into matters Myſterious, prove frequently an occaſion of profane and blaſphemous Thoughts; and therefore they muſt be carefully declin'd. He that hath an honeſt and conſcientious regard to his Duty, as it is plainly ſet down, and humbly deſires to know, and ſerve God above all, is ſeldom ſo much troubled with this kind of

of Thoughts, as those are, who aspire to things vastly above them; and place more of their Duty in *Speculation*, than in *Practise*. When Men will forsake the plain way, and wander into unbeaten Paths; no wonder that they fall into mischief. When Men will instead of endeavouring to understand *GOD*'s Commandments, and do his Will, aspire to comprehend his *Essence*, his *Decrees*, *&c.* and find out the Almighty to perfection. When they will not be contented to know the *Saving Truths* of the *Gospel*, and practice their plain and legible Duty; but nicely pry into the *Secret things, which belong neither to us, nor our chil-*

dren. When they will graſp at all, and think to underſtand *all Myſteries, and all Knowledge*, and *remove Mountains.* Then they *naturally*, as well as *juſtly*, fall into profane imaginations, and blaſphemous Thoughts; and ſometimes into *Errours*, and *dammable Hereſies.* This is the true caſe of the preſent Age; and the main occaſion of theſe blaſphemous opinions concerning the Bleſſed *Trinity*, which are now ſo daringly broach'd amongſt us: and indeed 'tis that to which moſt of Men's *profane* and *enormous* Thoughts of God are owing. And ſince it is ſo, truly if they would avoid them, they muſt learn to be more modeſt

modeſt and humble, and to have a more conſcientious regard to their duty.

They muſt content themſelves with theſe plain Diſcoveries, which God hath made of his Mind and Will; and labour to follow them: and adore his *unſearchable* Wiſdom in the reſt. An humble *Obedience* will much more promote the eternal Salvation of our Souls, than ſuch bold *Speculations:* and the *Love* of God is far better than all ſuch impious and fruitleſs Attempts to *comprehend* him. For all ſuch *Attempts* will in the end *confound*, but never *advantage* the Minds of Men. Theſe *high-flyers*, when they are in their

altitudes, ſuddenly their waxen wings melt, and down they fall headlong, like *Lucifer*, from Heaven. When we *reverently* ſubmit our Reaſon to Divine Revelation, and the conduct and guidance of the Word of God; when we make that (with the *Pſalmiſt*) *A lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our paths:* then we are ſafe, as well as free from theſe *horrid* Thoughts we are ſpeaking of; at leaſt they are not occaſion'd by our ſelves, if they ſhould chance to come into our Minds. But (I ſay) when *Reaſon* will be its own Guide, and Men will *walk in the light of their own fire, and the ſparks which themſelves have kind-*

Pſal. 119. 105.

kindled; they must needs err, they must needs stumble, as in the dark. Or like a Ship without ballast, be toss'd up and down, and made the sport of *every wind of Doctrine*. They will hereby be lyable to the *worst* Cogitations concerning the infinite Being.

Thirdly, A *Customary*, *Formal*, and *Indevout* Worshipping of *GOD*, is that which at length usually grows into *profane* and *blasphemous* Thoughts of him: Which therefore must diligently be avoided, if we desire to be without such Thoughts. For if in our most *Solemn* Address to Almighty God, we be not careful that our thoughts of him be III.

reverent and *compos'd*; our conceptions *high* and *holy*: it is easy to imagine, that at other times we shall be apt to have mean and low, or *profane* Thoughts of him. And why may we not think that this is a too common occasion of *profane* and *blasphemous* Thoughts? If I am not sollicitous to form my heart aright, and bring my Thoughts of the Great *GOD* into a due frame and temper of Devotion, while I am *worshipping* him, and in his more *solemn* and *immediate* presence: It naturally *leads* me (as well provokes *GOD* to *leave* me) to *gross*, *profane* and *impious* Thought of him. When a Man therefore is about to perform

form his Duty of Devotion to *God*, either in publick or private, let him endeavour to fix in his Heart ſuch Thoughts of him, as may exceedingly awe and compoſe him, and not be *indevout* and *formal* in his addreſſes to Heaven: and I verily think this may be a very proper means to preſerve him from profane or blaſphemous Thoughts; which, otherwiſe, 'tis reaſonable to expect will grow upon him.

Fourthly, *Diſcontent*, and a worldly *anxiety*, is that which (how far ſoever it may at firſt ſeem from it) very much conduceth to *profane* and *blaſphemous* Thoughts of *God*. And there is a great deal in that IV.

ex-

1 Joh. 2. 15. expreſſion of the Apoſtle, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* There are no perſons more apt to *arraign* the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of *God*, in the diſtributions of his *Providence*, than ſuch; to conceive not only *indecent*, *angry*, and *falſe*, but *profane* and *blaſphemous* Notions of him. None more apt to follow the *deſperate* advice of *Job*'s Job 2. 9. Wife; *Curſe God, and die*, than ſuch *wordly*, *repining*, *diſcontented* wretches, as place all their *Heaven* here. And that this is true, I think is a matter ſufficiently plain by our own experience; and 'tis eaſy to produce inſtances not a few. And therefore to be *humble*, *contented*,

tented, and *bleſſing* God; not *charging him fooliſhly*, or thinking of him *unworthily* in every ſtate and condition, I look upon to be part of the means in order to the avoiding *profane* and *blaſphemous* thoughts.

V. Another Rule which may be obſerv'd to this end, is, That when at any time we are aſſaulted with ſuch profane Thoughts, we *immediately* with a Sacred fear, *caſt them out* of our Minds. For profane or blaſphemous Thoughts are *eſpecially* ſuch as we ſhould not ſtay to argue, or diſpute with. And therefore we find that tho' our Bleſſed Lord thought fit to *argue* with the *Devil* in other Temptations; yet when he

he ſuggeſteth *profane* Thoughts
Mat. 4. 10. of God to him; our Saviour ſeems to *vary* in his defence, and immediately bids him be
Ver. 11. gone; Ὕπαγε Σατανᾶ, *Get thee hence, Satan, &c.* And then ('tis ſaid) *The Devil left him, and behold Angels came and miniſtred unto him.*

Whenever therefore this happens to be your caſe; that you are troubled with ſuch *horrid*, *profane*, or *blaſphemous* Thoughts of God, immediately caſt them out; do not let your Mind *dwell* upon them one moment. But do with this kind of evil Thoughts in *particular*, as you were taught to do in the VII. Direction for the *Well-governing* our Thoughts in *general*. In

In the next place, it is advisable, that at that time when we are assaulted with them, we send up an *Ejaculation* to Heaven, and lift up our Hearts to God in a short Prayer, that he would be pleas'd to *cleanse* our Hearts of them, and preserve us from them. When any such abominable Thought presents it self to thee; cry out, *O Lord, keep me! O Lord, save me! O Lord, let not the Devil have advantage over me!* Lord, I desire to love, and adore thee *with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my might.* O Lord, thou knowest that I am *grieved* at such Thoughts as these; and earnestly desire to have my Thoughts of thee to be VI.

he ſuggeſteth *profane* Thoughts
Mat. 4. 10. of God to him; our Saviour ſeems to *vary* in his defence, and immediately bids him be
Ver. 11. gone; Ὕπαγε Σατανᾶ, *Get thee hence, Satan, &c.* And then ('tis ſaid) *The Devil left him, and behold Angels came and miniſtred unto him.*

Whenever therefore this happens to be your caſe; that you are troubled with ſuch *horrid*, *profane*, or *blaſphemous* Thoughts of God, immediately caſt them out; do not let your Mind *dwell* upon them one moment. But do with this kind of evil Thoughts in *particular*, as you were taught to do in the VII. Direction for the *Well-governing* our Thoughts in *general*. In

In the next place, it is ad- VI.
viſable, that at that time when we are aſſaulted with them, we ſend up an *Ejaculation* to Heaven, and lift up our Hearts to God in a ſhort Prayer, that he would be pleas'd to *cleanſe* our Hearts of them, and preſerve us from them. When any ſuch abominable Thought preſents it ſelf to thee; cry out, *O Lord, keep me! O Lord, ſave me! O Lord, let not the Devil have advantage over me!* Lord, I deſire to love, and adore thee *with all my heart, with all my ſoul, and with all my might.* O Lord, thou knoweſt that I am *grieved* at ſuch Thoughts as theſe; and earneſtly deſire to have my Thoughts of thee to be

be such, as these Blessed Spirits entertain, who are continually in thy blissful presence, &c. And not only in *ejaculatory*; but in our set Prayers, and constant Devotions should we offer them up to God; purge and acquit our selves of them in his sight, and lay open the *sincere* and *vehement* desires of our Souls, to be rid of them. And by this means it is hop'd that we shall at length be free'd from them. Tho' they may not *presently* depart from us, but continue to molest us, even in our very *Prayers*, and most *Solemn* Duties, as they often will: Tho' Almighty God may suffer them to be injected into our Mind, for *wise* and *beneficial*

cial ends, which are unſeen, as (no doubt) he frequently doth; yet I think this is what very well becomes one that is afflicted with profane or blaſphemous Thoughts, and a *proper* way to eaſe his Mind of them.

VII. Again: In order to the remedying profane and blaſphemous Thoughts, have a ſpecial reverence of the *Name* of GOD. Never hear it mentioned without a Sacred *Veneration*, and Awe upon thy Soul: Let thy Heart *bow down* at the mention of him. Never let his Name be in thy mouth but with Devotion; nor ever hear others pronounce it *raſhly* or *profanely*, in common ſwearing, or curſing, without an holy

holy dread; and (if it may be done effectually) a ſober Reproof. A *cuſtomary* and *heedleſs* naming the Name of GOD, leads to profaneneſs, and encourageth blaſphemous Thoughts of him.

And therefore 'tis a dangerous evil to have the Name of GOD, or CHRIST in our mouths *ſlightly*, or *jeſtingly*; or upon any *frivolous* occaſion, or in the repetition of a Story, *&c.*

Phil. 2. 10. The Apoſtle ſaith, *That at the name of JESUS every knee ſhould bowe, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.* All the Heavenly Hoſt pay a moſt profound Reverence to that *Name*, which Men proſtitute,

and

and make ſo vile. And until we endeavour to imitate their adorations, we ſhall not eaſily be preſerved from ſuch Thoughts as are *horridly* profane. It is hard to imagine how that Perſon can be kept from thinking unworthily of God, who makes nothing of uſing his Name in his common Diſcourſe, or upon the moſt *petty* occaſions.

VIII. One *Rule* more which I would recommend to the purpoſe in hand, is this: Labour to *know GOD*, if thou wouldſt think highly, and worthily of him. The *Knowledge* of *God* is a proper Remedy againſt profane Thoughts. Now there is a Knowledge of *God* which

we may *not* ſeek after, as to know his Eſſence, his Decrees, *&c.* To endeavour ſo to know him, is a vain, as well as a preſumptuous thing; as was hinted before in this Chapter. But there is a *Knowledge* of God, which we may and ought to make our *Search* and *Study*; *viz.* The *Knowledge* of his glorious *Attributes*, his *Will*, and *Commandments*; and theſe things that in his Word he hath *revealed* on purpoſe to be known, in order to Man's preſent happineſs, and future perfection. Such a *Knowledge* of him as this every good Man will earneſtly endeavour after, and uſe all means of attaining; and the rather becauſe it is indeed an

ex-

expedient of avoiding such *profane* Thoughts of God as many are grievously troubled with. *Ignorance* is here so far from being the mother of *Devotion*, that nothing more tends to make our Thoughts of God vile, and blasphemous. The truth of this abundantly appears from the various and monstrous *Idolatries* of the *Gentile* World, and the gross and horrid Conceptions *they* had of their Deities. And also from the *Idolatries* of the Church of *Rome*, and that gross and *Carnal* way of Worship amongst them used; especially in the darkest Ages of *Popery*. When 'tis almost *incredible* to tell what absurdities and profa-

neneſſes, were the conſequences of their Ignorance. Nay, it muſt be acknowledg'd that even amongſt our ſelves, *ſome have not the knowledge of* God. *I ſpeak this to your ſhame.* And until they have, until they dō attain to *know* him in ſome meaſure. It cannot be imagined that their Thoughts of him ſhould be rectify'd. The more we *know* God, the more we come to *love* him; to be *tranſported* with him; and to have the moſt *high* and *noble* Thoughts of him.

Now this excellent and uſeful, and deſirable knowledge of God, is to be obtain'd theſe two ways,

By

By his Works,
and
By his Word.

First, From our own Obſervation of the ſtupendous frame of the *Creation*, and the mighty acts of his *Providence*. The admirable *Order* of all Beings; their *uſefulneſs* and *ſubſerviency* to Man: The eſtabliſhment of Kingdoms, and Empires. The preſervation and government of his Church: both his Judgments and his Mercies, *&c.* Theſe things, if *ſeriouſly* obſerv'd, and conſidered, are a great means to make us to *know* God, and conſequently to excite in us high, and holy thoughts of him; and ſo to pre- I.

ſerve us from all profane, or blaſphemous, or unworthy Thoughts of him.

II. And as we may come to know God by our own *Attentive* obſervation of the great Works of his Creation, and Providence; ſo we may by his moſt *Holy Word*. And indeed thence alone we can fetch our trueſt *Ideas*, and moſt proper Thoughts of God. The Scriptures are the beſt helps to our attaining the knowledge of him; wherein in a *Majeſtick ſtyle*, his glorious Attributes are repreſented to us. His *Goodneſs*, *Purity*, *Power*, *Juſtice*, *Truth*, are wonderfully diſplay'd in a various manner; by deſcriptions, hiſtorical

ſtorical Relations, amazing Acts, Prophecies, and Predictions, Precepts, and Admonitions, and ſurprizing *Revelations*; which no Man can conſider as he ought, but he muſt needs be inſpired with holy and *awful* Thoughts of the Great God; and admirably preſerv'd from all vain, wicked, or profane Thoughts, which prove a great terrour and affliction to many.

To draw to a *Concluſion* of this Chapter: A careful and humble Reading, and Hearing the holy Word of God, together, with a *Conſcientious* attendance upon his *Sacraments* and other Ordinances, is a very excellent way to be rid of

all profane, or blaſphemous thoughts. For our Hearts by this means are happily *ſeaſoned* with good things; and God's holy Spirit convey'd to our Souls, and laſting inclinations to Holineſs, are apt to remain in us.

But becauſe I would not leave theſe poor Souls, who are apt to be diſquieted, and *terrify'd* with ſuch thoughts as theſe, without ſome further *ſecurity*, comfort and ſatisfaction, in this matter.

Be pleas'd further to conſider, that tho' it be our Duty to hate and abhor, and *tremble* at the very firſt motion of ſuch profane, impious, or blaſphemous Thoughts; yet we have

have no reaſon to be ſo *terribly affrighted* at them, or *confounded* with them, as many (and theſe good *Chriſtians*) are. For the All-wiſe *God* doth frequently *ſuffer* us to be tempted with ſuch profane Thoughts for ends *excellent*, and *beneficial* to our own immortal Souls. As to humble us, and make us more *ſtrict* in the *Examination* of our own Hearts; more ſenſible of the *Deceitfulneſs* of them, which is in nothing more diſcernable, than in an extravagant Liberty of Thoughts.

Or elſe it may be to make us more *ſober* in our Underſtandings, to avoid *nice* inquiries into caſes *Myſterious*; and

ſhun

ſhun all *Enthuſiaſtick* expectations: or to rouſe up the *dull* and decay'd Powers of our Souls. Or it may be to try our *Faith*, and other *Graces*; and to ſee whether we will love him, when he thinks fit to *with-hold* his Divine, and Spiritual Comforts from our Souls, as well as when he *beſtows* them upon us. Or elſe to cauſe us perhaps to make the Glory of God our *higheſt* end in all our Performances, that our hearts run not upon any mean and low deſigns; but the *Pleaſing* the Almighty be, as it is, the end of our Being. Or elſe it may be to ſtir us up to the greater *Diligence* in *making our calling and election*

tion ſure; and not to let our eternal happineſs reſt upon ſuch uncertainties, as the generality of Men do theirs. But ſtrive to get as much *aſſurance* of our endleſs welfare as poſſibly we are able, *and* is conſiſtent with Faith, Hope, and other *Chriſtian* Vertues. Theſe then being, doubtleſs, ſome of the *gracious* ends for which God is pleas'd to ſuffer us to labour under ſuch Thoughts as I have been ſpeaking of; and it being oftentimes the caſe of *good Chriſtians* to be afflicted with them. Theſe poor Souls, who happen at any time to be diſquieted with them, have great reaſon to take courage, and to be *comforted* under them. And

And let them be assur'd of this, That that which is a man's *Burden*, will not be reckon'd as his *Sin*. And that if they hate these thoughts more, because they are *dishonourable* to God, than because they are *grievous*, and *troublesom* to themselves; and are by means of them made more *watchful*, *circumspect*, and *devout*, than they before were; then *Satan* shall answer for them, and not they: The *Devil* shall be judg'd for all these profane and blasphemous thoughts which they, dejected Souls, were so much afflicted with the apprehension of, as their own.

Mat. 11. 28.

And so I have dispatched this first *Species* of evil Thoughts,

Thoughts, *viz.* profane, and blaſphemous Thoughts.

CHAP. VI.

THe next kind of evil Thoughts, which deſerves our diſtinct Conſideration, is that of *Unclean Thoughts*. And there ſeems to be *more* danger in theſe, than the former; becauſe there is ſomething in corrupt Nature more *agreeable* to them, than to the other: And therefore it is apt more to be *pleas'd* with them. But to a *Good* Man; to a *True* Chriſtian, *theſe Thoughts* are no leſs diſquieting and hateful, than

than the former. And therefore I shall endeavour to prescribe some proper *Remedies* against them.

I. The first of which is *Prayer*: Which tho' it must be acknowledg'd to be an *Universal* Remedy, and must in no case of trial be pretermitted; for if any Man lack *Wisdom*, or *Grace* (of any particular kind whatsoever) *Let him ask it of God* (saith St. *James*) *who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not*: Yet I take it to be more *especially* needful here. And therefore we must be much in *Prayer*. If we find our selves to be assaulted with this kind of Thoughts; we must make it a part of our constant

James 1. 5.

Peti-

Petitions, that God would be pleas'd to cleanse, and purify *the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his holy Spirit:* That he would *mortify* our lustful desires, and quench the *fire* of concupiscence in us, that our Souls and Bodies may be the *Temple* of God. We must imitate the poor *Leper* in the Gospel, *Who fell down at Jesus's feet, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!* Mat. 8. 2. 'Tis no *easy* matter to subdue this kind of evil thoughts in *some* Complexions: But the difficulty of so doing, is greatest to such as have liv'd in an *habit* of lust, and uncleanness; and therefore we must call in the assi-

stance

ſtance of Heaven, by conſtant and devout *Prayer*.

II. Secondly, *Temperance*, and *Faſting*, is a proper Remedy for the ſuppreſſing of this kind of *Evil Thoughts*. While the Soul and the Body are ſo united, and make up one *Compoſitum*; the operations of the *Soul* will be greatly inclin'd, and byaſs'd by the Complexion, and Conſtitution of the *Body*; and therefore *that* muſt be kept in due order, and ſubjection.

A *pampering* and *indulging* the Fleſh, is a great promoter of Luſt; and when the Animal Spirits are intoxicated, the *Soul* can but feebly exert it ſelf. A Man can hardly preſerve

ſerve himſelf *then* from the *groſſeſt* acts of uncleanneſs, much leſs from impure *Thoughts*. And therefore *Temperance*, and *Self-denial*, are *always* neceſſary, in order to avoiding unclean Thoughts: which, as our Saviour ſaid of the unclean *Devil*, *Go not out but by Faſting, and Prayer.* Mat. 17. 21.

The Mind is *calm*, and *ſerene*, when the Body is in a regular temper. A Man is fit to meditate, and think on God and Heaven, and holy things, when he is *ſober* and *moderate*. And the reaſon of *Faſting*'s being made a Duty, is in order to tame the inſolencies of the Fleſh; to keep the Thoughts pure, the Reaſon clear; and

to make us more fit for Religious Duties. Upon which account the Duties of Self-denial, and Mortification, are not ſo *ſevere*, as they may ſometimes ſeem to us, but highly *reaſonable*. Since the denial of the gratifications of our ſenſual and *low* deſires, doth bring ſatisfaction to the *higher* appetites of the Soul; ſince while the *Body* is kept in due ſubjection, the *Soul*'s liberty, and activity is much the greater. And beſides, *Heaven* is worth ſtriving, and denying our ſelves for; if it were a work *much more* harſh and unpleaſant than it is. If this will denominate us of the number of *Chriſt*'s

true Diſciples, certainly we ſhould not ſtick at it: And that it will do ſo, our Bleſſed Lord hath aſſur'd us. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me.* Men will reſtrain their appetites, and deny themſelves in a great meaſure for ſome *temporal* and *worldly* ends; why ſhould they not do it then to gain *eternal* Happineſs? Mat. 16. 24.

St. *Paul* tells us, that in the ancient *Grecian* Games, call'd the *Olympick* Games, theſe that were the Strivers, or Combatants for the Prize, would be ſure to mortify themſelves, and keep to a *ſtrict* and *ſparing* Diet, thereby to bring down

their Fleſh, and make their Bodies *pliant* and *Athletick*. And all that they could hope to get by it, was only a Garland of flowers, and a little *frivolous* honour. And therefore if *they* would be at the pains to do ſo much for a Reward not worth a naming; how much *more* ſhould we do it in order to the avoiding unclean thoughts, and impure deſires; which will not only *hinder* us in our Striving for Heaven, but *unqualify* us for it. Thus the Apoſtle argues, 1 Cor. 9. 25, &c. *Every one that ſtriveth for the Maſtery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore ſo*

run

run not as uncertainly, ſo fight I not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my Body, and bring it into ſubjection, leaſt that by any means when I have preached to others, I may not my ſelf be a caſt-away.

III. The *Third* Remedy againſt unclean thoughts is, the Conſideration that they are of a *defiling* nature. They leave a ſtrange *pollution*, and *filth* behind them; and (if indulg'd) very *ſtrongly* incline to *actual* uncleanneſs. It is a *dangerous* thing to cheriſh thoughts of this kind, to delight in them, and dwell upon them.

For there are *none* more apt to grow uſurping and ungovernable by entertainment,

than *these*. They do moreover mightily unfit us for holy Duties. They weaken the Powers of the Soul to a *great* degree; and therefore as we value our Souls, as we esteem Heaven, into which no *unclean thing shall enter*; let us labour to avoid them: and this Consideration is proper in order thereunto.

IV. Fourthly, Keeping a *strict* guard over all our *Sences*, is here *particularly* necessary. For 'tis by the *Sences* that lust invades the Soul. And therefore unless we have a special regard to them, we cannot preserve our Souls from being polluted.

Our Eyes therefore should be

be turn'd away from all forbidden objects; our Ears be deaf to all obſcene diſcourſes, and the *reſt* of our Sences ſhun every thing that may have the *leaſt* tendency to this kind of evil Thoughts. A vain curioſity to be a *ſpectator*, hath ſometimes proved fatal, eſpecially in *two* Inſtances in the Scriptures. And one unguarded Sence hath e're now proved a Man's deſtruction. Therefore if we will approve our ſelves to God in *ſincerity*, and are deſirous to attain a right Government of our Thoughts, and avoid this kind of them eſpecially, we muſt be ſure to keep a ſtrict watch over all our Sences.

Gen. 34. 1, 2. 1 Sam. 11. 2.

V. Fifthly, An having recourſe to the Blood of JESUS, is a great preſervative againſt, and cure of, unclean Thoughts. This was the Practiſe of a devout Perſon, *Cum me pulſat aliqua turpis cogitatio, ſtatim recurro ad vulnera Chriſti, & ſanabor*; *i.e.* 'When I am aſſaulted by any impure thoughts, I 'have immediate recourſe to 'the Wounds of *Chriſt*, and I 'ſhall be healed.

Therefore when any filthy imagination comes into thy Heart, let thy Mind, preſently divert from it, to *Chriſt Jeſus* hanging on the Croſs. Imagine that thou ſaweſt his precious Blood ſtreaming fourth, and pray to God that thy Soul ma be cleans'd therein. Eſpe-

Eſpecially flie to the *Bethesda* of his Blood in the Sacrament, for all the diſeaſes of thy Soul; but this of Unclean Thoughts in particular.

The Sacrament is a *Purifying*, and ſtrengthening ordinance, if we come to it rightly prepared. And 'tis moſt commonly for want of a devout *Preparation*, that we find not the happy effects of it. The Sacrament is our Spiritual *Armour* againſt all the *Darts of the Devil*; againſt all his impure ſuggeſtions, and temptations. And if we come to it with a truly penitent, ſincere, and humble Heart; tho' *this* kind of wicked Thoughts, or any other ſhould

in-

infeſt us even while we are at the *Lord's Table*: yet our merciful and gracious God, will accept our ſincere, tho' mean endeavours; and at length grant us that purity, which we are ſo *ſenſible* we want, and ſo *earneſtly* pray for; that we may be able to ſerve him without diſtraction, and worſhip him with our *whole* Souls, and *unmixed* affections.

VI. Another Remedy againſt *Impure Thoughts*, and *Luſtful Imaginations*, which I ſhall recommend to you, is, the ſerious conſideration of the *Purity* of *GOD*. The Almighty is a God of infinite Purity and Holineſs. He hates all uncleanneſs, and cannot look upon

upon the leaſt ſin, or pollution, *even of our thoughts*, with approbation. And it will be a means of avoiding ſuch unclean Thoughts, to have *this* Conſideration frequently in our Minds; (*viz.*) That God is infinitely pure and holy, and hates all kinds and degrees of filthineſs and uncleanneſs. This queſtionleſs was that which made good *Joſeph* reſiſt the ſollicitations of his wanton Miſtreſs with, *how can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* Gen. 39. 9. The Lord will dwell in a clean Habitation, or none. And if even the *wicked Spirits* will have their houſe *ſwept and garniſhed*, before they will enter in; ſurely God will not dwell in a *worſe* then they. Mar. 12. 44. To

To the *Pure* heart alone he makes discoveries and communications of himself. To the *Clean* Soul he affords his Grace and Comforts. *These* alone he blesseth with his presence *here*, and admits into his beatifick presence *hereafter*. *These* only can enjoy God; for *these* alone are *qualified* to enjoy him. *Hell* is the stinking Lake of all uncleanness, where impure Spirits and ugly fiends wallow in the steam of their horrid pollutions. But *Heaven* is the habitation, of pure, chaste, and *Virgin* Souls: The Region of Innocence; the Kingdom of the *Lamb*; *Where there is no manner of thing that defileth.* And he that

that hopes to come thither, and to dwell with God everlastingly; *He* (I say) *that hath this hope, purifieth himself even as he is pure.* 1 Joh. 3. 3. *Who* (saith the *Psalmist*) *shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath* clean *hands, and a* pure *heart, and hath not lift up his mind unto vanity.* Psal. 24. 4. And to this *internal* purity of the *Soul* and *Thoughts*, is that *glorious* Beatitude of the vision of God annexed: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Mat. 5. 8.

Now besides these, there are several other Rules to be observ'd, for the avoiding this kind of evil Thoughts; which cannot conveniently be enlarg'd

larg'd on in this Treatise; as the shunning Idleness, and vain and lascivious conversation; loose Sports, and Theatrical Shews, &c. which I leave to your own care, and observation to discover.

CHAP. VII.

REvengeful and *malicious*, or *uncharitable* Thoughts, are another kind of *Evil Thoughts*, which deserve our *distinct* consideration. For they do many times domineer and tyranize in the Souls of Men, to the effectual hindrance of their Duty. Whatever favourable opinion Men may have of;

or

or whatever excuſes they may pretend for them, 'Tis undeniable that the *Chriſtian* Religion makes it to be our duty to be kind, and charitable, loving and forgiving to all the world, even our worſt Enemies. *But* (ſpeaks our Lord) *I ſay unto you, love your enemies; bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.* And (*Math.* 5. 21.) *Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, Thou ſhalt not kill; and whoſoever ſhall kill, ſhall be in danger of the judgment: But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever is angry with his Brother, without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger* Mat. 5. 44.

of

of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his Brother Racha, (i.e. Thou empty, or despicable fellow, or the like) *shall be in danger of the council: But whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.* From which it is plain, That the *Christian* Law doth forbid all *Malice* and *Revenge:* not only actually doing hurt to any; but all contumelious language, and cherishing even the least Revengeful Thought.

But yet how apt is Humane Nature to retain the memory of a *suppos'd* Injury? How prone is a Man to have a *Grudge* in his Heart against his Brother? Perhaps he will carry a fair shew of charity:

But

But yet his Conſcience tells him there lurks Rancour, or at leaſt a *Grudging* in his Heart: And 'tis a difficult matter to bring him into a better mind. But he muſt be of a better mind, if he will be a *Chriſtian* indeed; and he muſt not only *forgive* an Enemy, but *forget* him too.

This (as is very probable) hath been the *true* cauſe of keeping many Perſons from the *Lord*'s Table; who rather than they will lay aſide ſome little *Punctilio* or other, and be *clothed with that Humility*, which becometh *Chriſtians*, in order to a Reconciliation; they will obſtinately deprive their Souls of that ineſtimable

1 Pet. 5. 5.

Benefit. This now being diametrically oppoſite to the Spirit of *Chriſtianity*; I ſhall lay down Rules for the ſuppreſſing this kind of *Evil thoughts*. And they are *briefly* theſe following.

I. Firſt, The Conſideration of what *Chriſt Jeſus* our Maſter, (who hath forbidden all uncharitable thoughts) hath done for us.

How can any one think of Revenge, who hath received ſuch favours, and immunities (as every *Chriſtian* hath) at the hands of his Redeemer? How unlike a *Chriſtian* is it to cheriſh ſo much as an envious *Deſire?* How different from the mind of *Chriſt*, and the cha-

charity of a Forgiving *Jesus?* who hath done and ſuffered more for Us *(his Enemies)* than 'tis poſſible to expreſs. Truly therefore, to conſider this *ſeriouſly*, is a ſufficient check to all ſuch Thoughts as theſe; and a proper means to eject them. 'Tis an hard matter for a Man to be ſo profligate, as to take pleaſure in the miſfortunes, or lapſes of others, who conſiders how much he himſelf is indebted to the *Goodneſs* of *GOD*. To *deviſe* a Revenge, or Calumny upon his Bed againſt any Perſon; to ſeek occaſions to diſcover a *mote in his Brother's eye*; to proclaim his errours, as upon the houſe-top, and to repre-

ſent his miſtakes to be his Vices: To ſlander, back-bite, and defame his Neighbour; and to ſupport his own Reputation, or Eſtate on the ruine of another's: When any of theſe things are the *Buiſineſs* of any Man's Thoughts; he is ſo far from being a true Diſciple of our *Lord Jeſus*, that he is *in the very gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity.*

Beſides the great uneaſineſs that ſuch Thoughts are to the Mind that harbours them, and the effectual hindrance that they are to holy Duties; they carry in them a very great *diſſimilitude* to the temper of the meek, the kind, and the charitable *Jeſus*, ſhewn to *our ſelves.*

ſelves. Which to one that makes *conſcience* of his Profeſſion, is a very hainous and deteſtable thing. Behold thy Saviour hanging upon his Croſs, and praying for thee, and the reſt of his murderers; and I ſhould think, that *Sight* would quickly baniſh all Revengeful, Grudging, or Uncharitable Thoughts out of thy Mind; and make thee more eaſy and pleaſant to thy ſelf, and more fitted for thy Duty.

Secondly, The Conſideration of what our own *Demerit* is; and what indignities, and affronts our ſins have been to *God*, is another Expedient for the avoiding this kind of Evil Thoughts. II.

Fear,

Fear. or ſome Temporal conſideration, may keep a Man from executing his revenge: but in order to the preſerving himſelf from wicked, uncharitable Thoughts, which are hateful in the ſight of *God*, and highly puniſhable, the conſideration of our own Demerit, is a proper expedient.

And here we cannot but fall down in adoration of the forbearance, and longanimity of a provoked *God*, towards us miſerable offenders. We cannot but with the deepeſt convictions acknowledge that we have offended GOD infinitely more, than any have offended us. The dignity of His Perſon, is a tranſcendent ag-

gra-

gravation of every ſin, be it what it will. And *this* is a very perſwaſive motive for us to overlook all Injuries and Affronts; which how great ſoever they may be in themſelves, are yet *comparatively* petty and inconſiderable ones. 'Tis a piece of great preſumption for any Perſon, to have *Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us* in his Mouth, while he harbours envious, malicious or uncharitable thoughts in his Heart. And whoſoever duly conſiders himſelf, and what a ſinful, unworthy Creature he is, [And he would do well here to call to mind ſome of his greateſt ſins] will not

easily cherish any rancorous, or invidious Thoughts long: nay, not *suffer the sun to go down upon his wrath.*

III. It may cool our incens'd or uncharitable thoughts, if when they are apt to arise in our Heart, we consider on that perfect love, union, and sincere affection that there is among all the Blessed Saints and Angels in Heaven: and that if ever we would come to Heaven, we must be *like* them. One Heart, and one Soul animates all the Inhabitants of Glory. There is not the least opposition or variation in their desires, or affections. Every one of the Blessed is unspeakably dear to all the rest. *God*

God is love, (St. *John* tells us) and his radiant likeneſs is ſtamp'd upon every glorify'd Soul, which makes it ſurpaſſingly fair and beautiful. Love! 'tis the Epitome of happineſs! And as it is the cement of *this* Creation, which keeps all the parts of it in an harmonious order; ſo 'tis the glory and beauty of Heaven. And whoſoever he be that retains the leaſt Grudge, or uncharitable Suſpicion, or revengeful Thought, is unfit to live among theſe affectionate Spirits; and to receive the tranſporting Illapſes of the Divine and infinite Love. 1 Joh. 8. & v. 16.

Which conſideration ſhould effectually baniſh every malicious

cious or uncharitable thought out of our Hearts. And indeed *this* kind of evil thoughts is ſuch, as we muſt by no means eſteem ſlight and inconſiderable. They often produce very ſad effects, when encouraged: they run Men into horrible extremes. Beſides that, they greatly hinder us in doing our Duty acceptably; and are ſo diſpleaſing to God, that they render all pretences to Religion vain, and inſignicant; and blaſt the beſt of our Sacrifices, and the choiceſt *gift that we bring to the altar.*

Mat. 5. 23.

And therefore we cannot but think our ſelves oblig'd to mortify, and ſubdue them: and never ſuffer our ſelves to be

be at reſt, until we find in us a *real* and *univerſal* Reconciliation; and an *undiſſembled* Love and Charity to all the World: In order to which, there are ſome other Rules to be obſerv'd. As diveſting our ſelves of an immoderate *Self-love*, which is apt to ſtick to moſt Men; avoiding Pride, and Partiality. Conſtant Prayer, *&c.* But I hope theſe that I have mentioned, may put you upon enquiring after the reſt.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

THere is hardly any thing that is a greater occaſion of affliction to us, and that more deprives us of that Spiritual Comfort wch we hope for from the Service of God; than the Inconſtancy, and Wandring of our Thoughts, while we are imploy'd about *Holy things*. And therefore I ſhall in this Chapter endeavour to lay before you ſuch Remedies againſt *Wandring Thoughts*, as I hope may not be in vain.

This kind of evil thoughts doth in its compaſs take in all other kinds of them. For ſome-

ſometimes our Wandring Thoughts are profane and blaſphemous, ſometimes wanton and obſcene; and ſometimes idle, and fooliſh, *&c.*

Now theſe Wandring Thoughts when we are imploy'd about Holy things, are in a great meaſure owing to our ſelves, and there is much in our power, in order to their cure. We will conſider what are the principal occaſions of them, and that will direct us to the Remedies againſt them.

Firſt then, *Wandring thoughts* are oftentimes occaſion'd by a want of *Preparation* to Holy duties. We careleſly and temerariouſly ruſh on to the performance of them. We think indeed I.

deed that they *must* be done; but yet consider not (as we ought) the *manner* of doing them. We go to our Prayers as to our *Secular* affairs; and make but little difference between the most *solemn* and *ordinary* actions of our Life. Which is oftentimes the cause why our Thoughts wander, and scatter: and so we reap but little comfort, or advantage from our best performances.

'Tis expedient then, and our duty before ever we engage in any set performance of the Worship of God, that we prepare our selves by some previous Thoughts, and pious Dispositions, that so we may

may come to our duty in a right manner: That our Souls may be prepoſſeſs'd, and fitted for the ſervice of God.

We think it too bold and preſuming, to thruſt our ſelves into the preſence of an Earthly Prince, without due conſideration. And therefore ſurely it cannot be thought leſs to approach the face of the *Infinite GOD*, without a ſolemn compoſure of Spirit, and a preparation of Thought. But beſides the *evil* of ſo doing; the *Natural* conſequence of it, is to make our Thoughts looſe and wandring. And unleſs we ſet about holy Duties, with a due preparation of Mind, it can hardly be conceiv'd

ceiv'd how it ſhould be otherwiſe. When therefore we draw nigh unto God in the way of his worſhip, either in our Cloſets, or Families, or in the Publick Aſſemblies of the Church, and eſpecially in the laſt of theſe; 'tis our Duty to diſpoſe our hearts before-hand, and to ſettle them in a due frame of Devotion: becauſe our deportment, when we are actually engag'd in it, doth mightily depend thereon. Thus the *Preacher*; *Keep thy foot when thou goeſt to the houſe of* God, *and be more ready to hear, than to offer the ſacrifice of fools; for they conſider not that they do evil. Be not* raſh *with thy mouth*, and *let not thine heart*

Eccleſ. 5. 1, 2.

be

be hasty *to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few.* This Rule, in order to the avoiding wandring Thoughts, may be but little minded, but it is nevertheless useful.

Secondly, Want of *Intention*, and *settling* the Mind on God in the *actual* performance of holy Duties, is another great occasion of the *wandring* of our Thoughts therein. What is the reason of our complaints, that we do not hear the Word of God to our Spiritual comfort and advantage; pray with that fervour of Devotion; praise him with that enlargement of Soul; and have that *relish* of II.

Divine things, which we would or ought? Why 'tis for want of a due *care* of our Thoughts, in the *actual* performance of holy Duties; which naturally follows from the former, *viz.* the want of a due Preparation before-hand. Why are our Minds in the ends of the Earth going a Pilgrimage to ſtrange Countries, and travelling after Foreign Objects? Why 'tis for want of a due *intention* of the Soul upon God? 'Tis becauſe we do not *poſſeſs* our Souls with an awe and fear of that God we worſhip; and conſider not the *importance* of that duty we are imploy'd in. When we come into the preſence of God, or into his Courts

to

to pay our homage to him; we ſhould ſeriouſly conſider into what an Infinite Preſence we come: what, who, that glorious God is we worſhip: meditate on his wonderful Attributes; and form ſuch an *Idea* of him, as conduceth to our *utmoſt* Devotion. We ſhould conſider not only the dignity and infiniteneſs of that God, whom we worſhip; but alſo that it is our *higheſt*, our *eternal Intereſt* to ſerve, and worſhip, and obey him. That it is our *trueſt* advantage and high honour to approach to him: And that we conſult the everlaſting good of our own Souls, in *honouring Him*: That he will be ador'd and worſhip- 1 Sam. 2. 30.

ped in ſincerity, and *true* Devotion: That he will not diſpence with an hypocritical and formal Devotion, and a *ſhew* of Godlineſs: But as *He is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*; ſo he is an avenger of all Hypocriſy and inſincerity.

If we come to Church only as a common and ordinary place, and ſet about holy Duties, without the moſt *ſerious* application of Mind, and an entire ſurrender of our Souls; it will be impoſſible to avoid wandring Thoughts.

When thou art therefore imploy'd in any part of thy Devotions, labour to fix thy Thoughts *ſteadily* on God. Be-

Beware of an *unattentive*, *heedleſs*, or *indifferent* temper. Sequeſtre thy ſelf from every thing that may withdraw thy Thoughts: As *Moſes*, by the Almighty's command, *Pull'd off the ſhoes from his feet* when he went up into the Mount of *Sinai*; ſo do thou fulfil the *Myſtery* of that Action: And when thou comeſt at any time into the Houſe of God to worſhip him; bowe down before the Lord who is *more eſpecially* preſent there. And ſay as the devout Patriarch did, when in his ſleep he ſaw that ſurprizing Viſion: *Surely the Lord is in this place. How dreadful is this place? This is none other, but the Houſe of* Exod. 3. 5. Gen. 28. 12, 16.

God; and this is the gate of Heaven! Labour to have the Eye of thy Soul intent upon God; and thou wilt ſee ſuch *excellent* and *wonderful* things in him, as will effectually *charm* thy Sight, and not ſuffer thee to look off, and thy *fooliſh* Thoughts to be vain, and *wandring*, as they will inevitably be without ſuch an *Intention.*

III. Thirdly, A *Diſſolute*, and *Unconſtant* Practiſe of holy Duties, mightily conduceth to *weaken* and *ſcatter* our thoughts in them. When we do not obſerve *Conſtancy*, and *Aſſiduity* in our Devotions, we loſe much of that holy Fervour, and ſacred Temper, which other-

otherwiſe we ſhould be happy in.

To omit our Prayers, or other holy Duties twice perhaps for having perform'd them once; or to be devout, and worſhip God by ſtarts and fits, and not in a regular and conſtant courſe, hath a very ill influence upon our thoughts. 'Tis true we *may* have Avocations; ſo that ſometimes we ſhall not be able to obſerve our uſual hours of Devotion. But alaſs! we often make that an hindrance, which ſhould be none: and by not being *conſtant* in keeping our Times and Seaſons for holy Duties; but being drawn aſide by every vanity, viſit, or

trifle, our Thoughts become vain, idle, and *wandring*, *when* we *come* to do our Duty. The Sacred temper is worn off; the Mind is out of that *Frame* of Devotion in which it was left by the *laſt* performance; and God is provoked to withdraw his aids from ſuch inconſtant *Devoto's*. This is a matter very well worth our Notice, and Obſervation; and lets us ſee the inconvenience and danger of miſſing Prayers, or other holy Duties but *once*, without a reaſonable cauſe.

IV. In this caſe alſo, too much *Liberty* given our *Sences* is of very evil influence: And therefore we muſt be very watchful over them, if we would pre-

prevent the aberrations of our Minds, when we are imploy'd about holy Duties.

What is the reaſon that our Devotion, is no more than Lip-ſervice? That our Hearts are ſo *far* from God, when we are in his more immediate preſence: That inſtead of being influenced with the Love of God, humbled to the duſt with a ſence of his *Greatneſs*, rais'd up with admiration of his Excellencies and Perfections; our Thoughts are engag'd either in fooliſh and ſilly, or wanton and impure ſpeculations? why 'tis becauſe we do not carefully guard our ſences; but give them an offenſive Liberty, by which means the *Church* of God

God is many times made a *Theatre*, or *Exchange*. What is it that Men come into the presence of God for? Is it not the greatest Honour, and Priviledge of a *Poor* Creature, to come into the *Presence* of his Creator? Is it not for most weighty and important ends that he comes *there*? Is it not in order to reconciliation with God, pardon of his sins; the Divine Assistance; and in the end the eternal Salvation of his *Precious* Soul? Are these *little*, and *trifling* things? Are they not the greatest concerns that can be? Surely they are. And therefore those who walk, whisper, talk, gaze, laugh, &c. when they are imploy'd about

Holy

Holy things, do much betray their ſtupidity and folly, and their mean and irreligious ſence of the *greateſt* things in the World.

And beſides, they can never think to pleaſe God by ſuch a *Sacrifice of fools*; but do indeed greatly provoke him thereby. There cannot be a clearer argument of the *Vanity* and *profaneneſs* of a Man's Mind, than an unſerious and looſe deportment in the Worſhip of God; to which nothing adminiſters more than a careleſs Liberty given our ſences. For 'tis certain if we would have our Thoughts kept ſteady and intent, we muſt diligently keep our *Sences*. And he

he that would preſerve his Soul from *Wandring*, muſt never be ſo oddly at leiſure in his Devotions, as to gaze on this or t'other thing, or Perſon that hath fine Clothes, or a ſtrange Face, or ſuffer any of his Sences to be triflingly imploy'd.

This then is alſo a Rule neceſſary to be obſerv'd, in order to the avoiding *this* kind of evil Thoughts, (*viz.*) *Wandring* Thoughts in the Worſhip of *God*; which are often very troubleſom, and uneaſy to our Souls; and many times render our Sacred performances *fruitleſs* too.

V. In the next place, it may be obſerv'd, That to wandring and vain Thoughts in the Wor-

Worſhip of God, doth very much conduce a pompous multitude of Ceremonies, ſuch as there is in the Church of *Rome*, which is quite beyond the bounds of Gravity, and Decency.

But, thanks be to God, we of the Church of *England* are in no danger of having our Thoughts *thus* drawn aſide. Becauſe theſe *few* Ceremonies which are obſerv'd in it, are appointed in great Wiſdom and Diſcretion: And there is not the *leaſt* thing in all our Liturgy, that is apt to excite *one* vain, or wandring Thought in any Man's Mind: but *all* is ſo uniformly ordered and diſpoſed, as greatly tends to the

the increaſe of Piety, and advancement of true Devotion. This *muſt* be acknowledg'd by all ſober and impartial Men, ſo that I need only *mention* this particular.

But yet there is one thing, which I think to be here worth our Notice, and which very much conduceth to the prevention of wandring Thoughts in the Worſhip of God. And that is an *Uniformity* of Action in the Divine Service. My meaning is, that we ſhould *kneel*, when others kneel, and *ſtand*, when they ſtand, (as the Church in the Rubricks appoints) and obſerve an Harmony in our *outward* deportments, as well as *inward* Devotions:

votions: and this will be a means of preſerving our Thoughts from flying off. Whereas when *this* Perſon kneels, and *another* ſtands up, a *third* ſits down, a *fourth* leans, *&c.* this is apt to beget in us an improper variety of Thoughts, and to make our Minds wandring.

VI. *Covetouſneſs*, and *Worldly-mindedneſs* neceſſarily makes our Thoughts vain and wandring, while we are about holy things. In this caſe eſpecially it's true, that *No man can ſerve God and Mammon.* We can no more have our Thoughts *Heavenly* and *Earthly*, *Spiritual* and *Carnal* at the ſame time, than we can look upward

ward and downward at once. *Covetouſneſs* therefore, and worldly-mindedneſs muſt needs be avoideed, if we would eſcape *Wandring Thoughts*. For *how* can ſuch a Man pray, or ſerve God in any tolerable manner, who hath all the while his Heart and affections ſet upon the *World?* How can he attend upon the Ordinances of *GOD*, without interruption, whoſe Mind is at home, about his Riches, Farms, or his Merchandiſe? Theſe things *ſteal* away his Thoughts, and for that reaſon *Covetouſneſs* is (by St. *Paul*) termed *Idolatry*. *Here* therefore eſpecially muſt we practiſe that Advice of our Bleſſed Saviour: *Take no Thought*,

Col. 3. 5.

Matth. 6. 31, &c.

thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed: (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things:) But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, & his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

When-ever therefore thou setteſt about the duty of *Prayer*, *Meditation*, or any other holy Duty, either in private or publick; be ſure to ſhut out all *covetous*, *ſenſual*, and *worldly* Thoughts. Let not thy Mind hanker after thoſe *Fleſh-pots*, when thou art going into *Canaan*, and to have ſome proſpect, tho' not to take *poſſeſſion*

of the promis'd Land. This is the way to have thy Mind fix'd and intent, and by that means better'd and edified. This is the Myſtical meaning of that Action of our Saviour: *viz. His whipping the buyers and ſellers out of the Temple, ſaying, My houſe ſhall be called the houſe of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.* 'Twas to *ſhew* that when we come into the *Houſe* of *GOD*, to worſhip the Eternal Majeſty, and in all other holy Duties; we ſhould abhor all ſuch profane mixtures, as *Covetouſneſs*, and *Worldly-mindedneſs*, which are the *Tables of the Money-changers*, and *the Seats of them that ſold Doves:* and altogether

Matt. 21. 12, 13 &c.

ther unſuitable to theſe holy Performances we are about. We muſt therefore take our leave of all worldly, covetous or anxious Thoughts: otherwiſe our Minds muſt unavoidably wander, when like that of *Martha*, *They are cumbred about many things.* All the cares of the world muſt be baniſhed from our Hearts. Even *prudent* and *honeſt* care is unſeaſonable here, and nothing but this *one thing neceſſary* muſt be minded. As for all worldly Thoughts, or terreſtrial Imaginations, we muſt *ſhake off the very duſt of them from our feet.* We muſt in our Devotions ſoar ſo high, as to be out of reach of the *fatal*

Luke 10. 40.

Magnetiſm of Earth. This muſt we endeavour to do, if we would avoid this kind of evil Thoughts, *viz.* wandring Thoughts in holy Duties.

VII. Again: In the next place there muſt not be the leaſt grain of *Ambition*, or Vainglory in any of our Performances; for that will carry away our Thoughts and Imaginations after a thouſand *vain*, and *fooliſh* objects. The approving our ſelves to an *Omniſcient GOD*, muſt be our *ſole* end in all holy Duties. And the only reaſon of our being pleas'd with our *beſt*, and moſt excelling Performances, (if ſuch ſinful ones can any of them be called ſo) ſhould be that

that they the *more* tend to the Glory of God; leaſt we loſe all the reward of them, and incur that *juſt opprobrium* of our Saviour's wo on the Scribes and *Phariſees*: *When thou prayeſt thou ſhalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray ſtanding in the ſynagogues, and in the corners of the ſtreets, that they may be ſeen of men; verily I ſay unto you, they have their reward.* Matth. 6. 5.

To theſe Rules and Directions, in order to the avoiding wandring Thoughts, may be added. A careful obſervance of all the Duties of the *Lords-day*: A minding the things of this World (when they ought to be minded) with

indifference and a truſt in the over-ruling Providence of *God*. That we be more and more humble and repenting.

That there remain no ſin unmortified in us.

A devout and earneſt Praying to be delivered from them, that ſo we may ſerve *GOD* without diſtraction, in imitation of the *Bleſſed* in Heaven, *&c.*

Theſe are the *Principal* Rules that I could diſcover, in order to the avoiding vain and wandring Thoughts in the worſhip of God: Which are oftentimes an unſpeakable affliction to *Good Chriſtians*, and which 'tis no ſmall difficulty to prevent,

But

But if after the uſe of theſe Directions, which I have laid down, and all that we can do, we *cannot* be rid of them; but they will ſtill haunt and diſturb us; yet we muſt perſiſt in our Duty. Tho' they ſhould come very thick upon us, yet we muſt not be diſcouraged from our Duty: For leaving that undone is (I am ſure) far from being a Remedy againſt them; and gives the *Devil* a greater advantage over us, than we are aware. We muſt therefore continue in our duty, tho' it be with an heavy heart: And then we ſhall retain the *Vertue*, tho' we loſe the *preſent ſatisfaction* of our Obedience. GOD ſees the ſincerity of our

hearts, and will *assuredly* reward us at the last. Altho the *Devil* (who hath a great hand in these Thoughts also, as we find in the Parable of the *Sower*) doth continually vex, and trouble us with them; yet let us wait upon *GOD* with patience, and an humble observance of these Rules laid down, as far as we are able: and then we shall be in no danger by reason of such Thoughts, tho' we should be grappling, and fighting with them, as long as we live. 'Tis impossible (I think) that we should be *totally* free'd from them in this *fluid Medium*; in this state of frailty and corruption: that the Mind should be

Matt. 13.

be *quite* cleanſed of theſe annoyances. But yet we are to conſider that our Life is a continual warfare; and our condition here a ſtate of imperfection: and that therefore we are not to deſpair, as if we had done no good, becauſe we have not attain'd to what this Life cannot afford.

But to comfort our ſelves with *this viz.* that if in Obedience to God's Commands, we maintain the Combat, and fight againſt them, and uſe ſuch Remedies as are preſcrib'd; God will accept of our Endeavours; paſs by our Infirmities, and grant us at laſt a *Compleat* Victory in Heaven above, which alone is *CONSUM-*

SUMMATION: Where we shall be free from bodily weaknesses (which many times greatly administer to such, and indeed I think to most other *Evil thoughts*) and from all the feeblenesses and impotencies of the Mind. From all vain and enticing Objects from *without*; and from all the treachery of Corruption from *within*. From every *wanton* Glance, every *vain* Imagination, and every *idle* Thought.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

WE are now come to the laſt kind of evil Thoughts, which I ſhall more particularly handle in this Treatiſe: *viz.* Sad, melancholy, or deſpairing Thoughts. And in order to our taking a true obſervation of theſe, and applying proper Remedies againſt them: we are to take notice, That the occaſion of *theſe* Thoughts is partly in the habit and conſtitution of the Body. This is undeniable to any Perſon that hath made but the *leaſt* Obſervation in things of this nature.: For theſe Perſons,

ſons, who are moſt of all troubled with this kind of Evil Thoughts (for ſuch they are to be reckon'd) are *hypochondriacal* and *hyſterical* People, and whoſe Conſtitution is impaired by ſome bodily Diſeaſe: and therefore the Remedies againſt them, muſt be partly *Natural*, and partly *Spiritual*. But yet I hope I ſhall not be thought to treſpaſs, if I happen to ſpeak a word or two of the *former*.

Dea bona valetudo---Health, is the greateſt of *Temporal* Mercies; and that without which we can but weakly proſecute our *Spiritual* concerns. 'Tis the Soul of Life; and as we can never be too thankful to God for it; ſo every

every act of Excesſ, whereby it is impair'd, is a greater ſin, than Men are aware. Becauſe 'tis the great advantage of Health and Vigour of Body, that it renders us capable of ſerving God, and of duly preparing our ſelves for the eternal enjoyment of him. Every Diſeaſe hath an influence upon the Soul; and the indiſpoſitions of the Body, do and will affect the Mind, notwithſtanding all the Dreams of the *Stoicks*. But of all the diſeaſes incident to Humane Bodies, that of *Melancholy* deſerves moſt to be pitied. It ſhould not be ſlighted with the reproachful names of *Whimſey*, and mere *Fancy*. 'Tis a great injury done to Perſons who

who are affected with it, to diſregard their complaints, and laugh at their Miſeries. Tho' they ſhould not indulge them, yet ſome pity is due to them. Did they but know the woe and anguiſh; the terrour and amazement, that they endure, could they but be ſenſible of half their miſery; they could not chuſe but pity them. An *Hypochondriacal* or *Hyſterical* Perſon, that is *deeply* affected with the diſeaſe, is an Object that as well deſerves compaſſion, as any other whatſoever. And if I ſhould endeavour to give you an adequate deſcription of that Malady, 'twould fill a Volume. What an infinite variety of evil Thoughts

of

of all kinds, are the effects of it? whichbeing in a great measure owing to the Diſeaſe, the hurry of the Imaginations following that of the Animal Spirits: There are ſome *Natural* Remedies to be made uſe of: For which I muſt leave you to the Learned in Nature, who will tell you, that *very much* depends upon *Obſervation* and *Exerciſe*. That to be morigerous and moderate in eating and drinking; and to be much in bodily exerciſe, but not violent, is moſt proper advice. If a Perſon hath but the vertue to be regular in his way of Living, and the patience to *continue* bodily exerciſe, he doth a great deal towards making

making his Life more eaſy, and his thoughts more comfortable. For every thing that tends to make the Blood and Spirits lively, regular, and vigorous, tends to diſpel the blackneſs and heavineſs of the Thoughts. Which therefore whoever is ſo unhappy as to be afflicted with *Melancholy*, muſt ſtudy; he muſt (I ſay) apply himſelf to the uſe of ſuch things as tend to cheriſh his Blood, and exalt his Spirits. To which all vicious extremes are directly contrary. The Learned *Phyſicians* will alſo tell you, That none are more voracious of *Medicines*, than melancholy Perſons; but that their deſire in *that* is no more

to

to be indulg'd, than in many other things; and that there may be too much, as well as too little--- But I am gone too far this way. I would only have it obſerv'd, That ſad, melancholy, and even *deſpairing* Thoughts, are ſometimes the conſequences of this diſeaſe: for *ſuch* it is, as much as a Fever, or any other. And therefore the *Phyſician* muſt be conſulted.

But altho' the Infirmities of the Body do very much conduce to ſuch Thoughts as theſe; yet we ſhould be mindful, that there is the hand of *GOD* in them too. And not ſo to lay the blame upon Natural Indiſpoſition, as to

have no other Thoughts about it. We may not think that this caſe is purely *Phyſical*, and that therefore there is no need of any *Spiritual* Remedies: For there is.

I. The firſt of which that I conceive to be proper, is a ſtrict and faithful *Examination* of our own ſelves. We muſt call Our ſelves to an account, ſearch into our own Hearts and Lives; and ſee what we have been, and done. And perhaps we may find ſome *great* and *wilful* Sin, that we have been guilty of; or ſome *wrong*, or *injuſtice*, that we continue in: which happens to be the cauſe of all our blackneſs, and ſadneſs. And theſe diſmall Thoughts

Thoughts which ſo affright us, are no other than the checks of our own Conſcience, which is a faithful Monitor, and Adviſer, and impartially cenſures and judges all our Actions. The Good that we do it approves of, commends and applauds in us: But no wilful ſin can eſcape its laſhes, and bitter reproaches. Its authority is an Emblem of the *Almighty*'s Power, and Omniſcience; and its Sentence *Præjudicium ultimi judicii.* It will in ſpight of the Sinner, *ſet his ſins in order before him:* and fill him with horrour and trembling and fearful Thoughts: which if they ariſe from *hence*, there is no remedy but *Re-*

pentance. Nothing but the Tears of a Godly Sorrow can eaſe his heavy Heart: And renewed reſolutions of watchfulneſs, and a more diligent Obedience for the time to come, are the beſt expedient to remove the blackneſs and ſadneſs that is npon his Soul. And when the Sinner hath *truly* repented, and there is an entire change wrought upon him; then he may hope for the light of *GOD*'s countenance to ſhine upon him: and *that he will comfort him now after the time that he hath plagued him, and for the years wherein he hath ſuffered adverſity.* But if upon a ſerious and deep *Examination* of himſelf,

he

he cannot find that these sad and frightful Thoughts, which infest him, proceed from any such cause, as some wilful and notorious sin; but that the sincere and earnest desire of his Soul is *always* to please God, and to keep a true conformity to all his Laws, and Commands: Then

II. Secondly, The next Remedy against these black and despairing Thoughts, is the consideration of the *transcendent goodness* of *GOD*. This is a proper means to fortify our Minds against them. Why shall I think that I am cast off of *GOD*, and forsaken of him? what argument can there be for desperation? why

is my Heart so dismal? my Thoughts so troubled? my Fears so tempestuous? Is it because I am a great Sinner? Truly *that* is a sufficient cause for me to be sorrowful, and humbled to the very dust; and floods of tears are not enough to bewail the guilt of my sin. But yet, O consider the *goodness* of GOD! He is the most loving and merciful *Being*; a compassionate and forgiving *Father*. He is *more* our *Father* than our Earthly Parents can be. He is *essentially* good in Himself, and good and gracious to his Creatures. He is ready, and willing to receive
Luke 15. every penitent Sinner, be his sins never so great; nay, he lov-

lovingly invites him to come to him. And *this* is a Consideration, which ſhould be a means to make thee grieve with *ſuch* a Sorrow, as will bring thee to him, and not drive thee from him: ſuch a *Sorrow* as may prompt thee to the performance of all that thou knoweſt to be thy duty: and not ſuch a Sorrow as totally incapacitates thee for it; and ſo is both a *diſhonour* to *GOD*, and a very great *injury* to thy own Soul. And therefore thou haſt all imaginable reaſon to thruſt out all *black*, *diſmal*, or *deſpairing* Thoughts. Matt. 11. 28.

Caſt thine Eyes abroad into the World. See! This noble

Structure was the effect of God's *goodneſs*; and all the Beauties and Riches of it, beſpeak his *Kindneſs*, and *Benignity*. Behold this ample Theatre of Praiſe! wherein every thing ſhews forth his goodneſs! And then look in upon *thy ſelf*, and thou wilt find thy own ſelf another World of the Divine Goodneſs! What inſtances of God's Goodneſs canſt thou diſcover in thy ſelf? what particulars of his Patience, and numerous Acts of his loving Kindneſs?

III. *This* therefore in the third place, is alſo another Conſideration, which would be a proper Remedy againſt *this* kind of evil thoughts before us.

Con-

Consider then your own *Experiences* of God's Goodness. When thou art at any time haunted with any *dreadful*, *killing*, *despairing* Thoughts, as if thou wert reprobated of God, and consign'd to eternal Damnation: call to mind how much of the *forbearance*, and *Bounty*, and *goodness* of God thou hast experimented; and then thou wilt see how *little* reason thou hast to yield to such *Confounding* Thoughts. Nay, he doth not only *spare* thee, and extend his Patience towards thee; but is *multiplying* his other *Mercies* upon thee; and so gives thee all the convincing proofs that can be, that he desireth not the death of

of any Sinner; but is the great lover of Souls, and *Would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

1 Tim. 2. 4.

How many dangers and evils hath he delivered thee from? nay, hath he not delivered thee from hurting thy *own self?* and by some strange Providence or other baffl'd thy wicked Intentions? In a word, what *large* Experience hast thou had of the *Goodness* of *God*, both to thy Soul and Body? How then canst thou be tempted to think that *God* hath *rejected* thee, when thou feelest irrefragable arguments to the contrary in thy self; when thou *tastest* and *seest* and hast *Demonstration how good,*

good, *and how gracious the* Lord *is*. No, it is the *Devil's* Suggeſtion, to torment and diſquiet thee. For he will not fail to *perſecute* theſe whom he cannot *kill*; and *terrify* thoſe whom he is not able to *deſtroy*. 'Tis the Stratagem of the accurſed Enemy of our peace, who takes advantage (perhaps) of the weakneſs, and tenderneſs of thy Spirits, caus'd by ſome *Bodily Indiſpoſition* or other, to inject *dreadful* Thoughts; repreſenting Almighty *GOD* as an implacable Judge, endeavouring to make him ſeem the ſame to us, that he is to himſelf. We are not ignorant of his Devices, and of his *reſtleſs* malice. If 2 Cor. 2. 11.

thoſe

thoſe poor Creatures, who are afflicted with *this* kind of evil Thoughts, could but be brought to *entertain* this Conſideration, *viz.* what *Experience* they have had of the *Goodneſs* of the *Lord*, and argue as *this* particular teacheth them: they would ('tis hop'd) find much eaſe and relief; and be convinc'd, that their deſponding Thoughts are very abſurd, and unreaſonable; and moreover, a Diſhonour, and a Reflection upon the Divine goodneſs.

IV. Art thou at any time afflicted with any *melancholy*, *diſmal* or *deſpairing* Thoughts? As a Remedy againſt them, conſider on the *Myſtery* of Man's

Man's *Redemption* by *Chriſt JESUS*. And *there* thou wilt find ſuch arguments againſt Thoughts of *this* Nature, as ſhould (one would think) be able entirely to ſubdue and conquer them. How *great*, how *incomprehenſible* is that Goodneſs, that not only gave a being to the World, and enrich'd all Creatures with his Beneficence; but ſent down the Eternal *Son of God*, to redeem undone Man? who can form a Thought worthy of ſuch Goodneſs? O *Chriſtians*, think with your *utmoſt* Intention, how great the Dignity of that Perſon is, who was our Saviour. And then think *ſeriouſly* on what he did to redeem

deem us! What Tongue can expreſs, or Mind conceive, the agonies that he endured, when he became the *Propitiation* and *Attonement*? The wrath that lay upon him, when he interpos'd between an angry God, and ſinful Man? His ſufferings were vaſtly above the reach of our Thoughts; and our *Ideas* of his Sorrow, are all faint and imperfect. Good God! How can we chuſe but ſtand amaz'd at the great *Myſtery* of Man's Salvation! admire the contrivance of the infinite Wiſdom therein, and adore the Divine *Philanthropy*? Who can *deſpair* of Mercy from him, who hath given us his *Own Son*? How can we think

think he will reject us for ever, when he ſpared not his *Own Son* for us? In the circumſtances that we are under the Goſpel, *Preſumption* is an evil to which (methinks) we ſhould be more *probably* tempted, than deſpair (tho' both of them are moſt unreaſonable and abominable:) Becauſe ſuch *Illuſtrious* Goodneſs; ſuch *unparalell'd* Mercy is diſplay'd in this *Evangelical œconomy*; ſuch *Peace on Earth, and good will towards Men*, as is enough for ever to ſilence all the ſad Complaints of *deſponding* Sinners; and to comfort, and encourage the moſt *guilty* Soul to true and unfeigned Repentance. Luke 2. 14.

When

When the *Devil* therefore at any time tempts thee to deſpair of GOD's Mercy, and to think that thou art *eternally* wretched, or haſt committed the *unpardonable* Sin: ſhew him the *Goſpel*, oppoſe to his Temptations the Glorious Myſtery of Man's *Redemption* by *Jeſus Chriſt*. Set before him the Noble Deſign, and the moſt generous overture of the *Goſpel*. And that will be a means to aggravate *his* Deſpair; but to comfort and ſupport *thee*, who art within that Covenant which *He* is not. *Chriſt* came into the World to ſave *thee*: He died to ſatisfy the Juſtice of GOD for *thee*. *He roſe again*

Rom. 4. 25.

for

for our justification. He is gone into Heaven, to intercede with God continually in *thy* behalf; and to procure all manner of good for thee. He is God all powerful, all-sufficient and most merciful. What an affront then is it to such a Redeemer, to yield to black and despairing Thoughts? What a Reproach cast upon his Merit and Satisfaction? and a cowardly, and pusillanimous disowning of his power and goodness, and a diffidence in his Veracity, and the authentickness of his gracious Promises?

V. The Application of the *Sweet and precious Promises* contain'd in the word of God, is

alſo a proper expedient againſt this kind of evil Thoughts. As the Scripture contains terrible and ſevere Threatnings, to deter ſecure and ſtubborn Sinners: ſo it is a Treaſure of moſt comfortable Promiſes, for the ſupport and ſtay of *Mournful*, and *Timerous* Souls. Without which (indeed) it would be ſometimes an hard matter for poor *Chriſtians* to bear up under the Thoughts of an approaching Eternity; and to reſiſt the furious aſſaults, and the *fiery darts of the Devil.* Almighty God hath therefore engag'd his Veracity; that if we fear him, and keep his Commandments; live according to the plain Rules of the Go-

Goſpel, and believe; we ſhall be aſſuredly happy and bleſſed. In order to which, he hath alſo *liberally* promiſed all ſuch ſupplies of Grace and Aſſiſtance as we ſhall at any time need. Theſe Promiſes therefore we ſhould *firmly* believe, and lay hold on, and apply to our ſelves, when we are at any time haunted with ſuch deſperate injections, as we are ſpeaking of. In vain have *Chriſtians* this Spiritual Armory, and Magazine, if they let theſe Weapons of war lie unus'd.

Ah! but ſays the *Diſconſolate* and *Drooping Soul*, I am ſatisfy'd of the Goodneſs of God; of the Infinite Merit of *Jeſus Chriſt*; that He was an

Ineſtimable Oblation for Sin, and a Sacrifice of tranſcendent value: but oh! I *fear* that the vertue of that great Sacrifice belongs not to me. But hear what comfortable words our Saviour *Chriſt* ſaith, unto all them that truly turn to him:

Matt. 11. *Come unto me all ye that are weary, and heavy laden with the burden of your ſins, and I will*

John 3. 16. *refreſh you. So God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten* Son, *to the end that* all *that believe in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

I believe alſo (ſaith the *Deſponding* Soul) *the exceeding great and precious Promiſes:* I am fully perſuaded that *in Chriſt*

Chriſt all the promiſes of God *are Yea, and Amen. And that Heaven and Earth ſhall paſs away; but not one tittle of* God's *word ſhall paſs away:* But theſe Promiſes do not appertain to me. I have forfeited all Title and Claim to them; and therefore oh! am certainly loſt and undone for ever. ----But let me beſeech thee (whoever thou art, that art depreſs'd with ſuch Thoughts as theſe) to beware, and conſider, That this is a *bold* and a *peremptory* Sentence, which thou paſſeſt on thy ſelf. Such a Sentence as none of all the created Beings can affirm. 'Tis the ſuggeſtion of the moſt deſperate Being, the Enemy of our Souls;

and what finite Being, can without the height of Preſumption, paſs ſuch a Sentence upon any Perſon? which (too) is ſo far from being true, that it is *utterly* falſe.

For the gracious Promiſes of the Goſpel are offered to *all* whatſoever; none are excepted. And every one that will lay hold of them, hath a title to them: provided he comes up to the conditions on which they are eſtabliſh'd. And therefore, in God's Name, hearken no longer to ſuch terrifying Thoughts; but let this ſtill the boiſtrous and troubled ſea; ſpread a calm over thy Mind; and ſtir thee up to a devout *Application* of the Bleſ-

ſed

ſed *Promiſes* of God, to thy own ſinful Soul.

Conſtant and devout Prayer is *here alſo* abſolutely neceſſary. Pray we therefore that God would quiet, and ſtill our hurried and affrighted Spirits: That he would (in mercy) be pleas'd to give us a right Underſtanding of our ſelves, his Promiſes, and Threatnings; that we may not caſt away our Confidence in him; nor place it any where, but in him. That God would vouchſafe to deliver us from the terrours of *Satan*, who is by St. *Peter* ſtil'd *A roaring Lion, walking about, ſeeking whom he may devour.* That he would ſcatter theſe black Clouds and Miſts, which VI. 1 Pet. 5. 8.

overſpread our Souls with the light of his countenance, and ſhine in upon our *drooping*, *ſorrowful* and *ſick* Souls. That the *Sun of Righteouſneſs may ariſe upon us, with healing in his wings*; and that the Lord would grant us that *inward* joy, and peace of Conſcience, which the World cannot give, and *which paſſeth all underſtanding*. That he would no longer hide his face from us; but ſhew us ſome glimpſe of his favour, which is *better than the life it ſelf*: That he would heal all the diſeaſes and infirmities both of our Souls and Bodies; *that the bones which he hath broken may rejoyce.*

James 5. 13. *Is any among you afflicted* (ſaith

St.

St. *James*) *let him pray. Then* eſpecially is a proper time to ſeek God's face. *Call upon me* (ſaith God) *in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me.* Pſal. 50. 15.

Ah! but I cannot pray! I cannot perform any holy Duty; or *fix* to any one part of Religion. I no ſooner retire into my Cloſet, or kneel down upon my knees, but a thouſand terrours infeſt me; ſo that I think 'twere better to let Devotion alone, then to perform it no better. (Ah! Lord!) But let me ask thee; Doſt thou do thy utmoſt? doſt thou ſincerely deſire to do thy duty, and to pleaſe God; and doſt thou put a

force

force upon thy ſelf, ſometimes, to perform the Duty of Prayer, or any other holy Duty; tho' it be with many interruptions, and diſtractions? *Continue* to do ſo; for by ſo doing, thou wilt approve thy ſelf unto *GOD*, who ſeeth thy *Heart*; and, in all probability, thy fears and terrours will by degrees vaniſh; theſe ſad and diſmal Thoughts will leſſen, and at length *quite leave* thee.

GOD is a God *hearing Prayers.* He *will* be ſought to in our diſtreſſes, and implored in our afflictions. Say then (with the Pſalmiſt) *Why art thou caſt down, O my Soul? and why art thou ſo diſquieted within me? hope thou in God,*

Pſal. 42. ult.

(pray

(pray to him) *for I ſhall yet praiſe him, who is the help of my countenance, and my God.*

VII. Again: To prevent theſe *ſad*, *dejected*, or *deſpairing* Thoughts we are ſpeaking of: we muſt be careful that we do not *love the World immoderately*. For how remote ſoever *Covetouſneſs* may ſeem from *Deſpair*, the *former* doth frequently conduce to the *latter*. He that ſets too great a value upon the things of this World, and a *Temporal* Proſperity, will not only be greatly hindred from doing his *Spiritual* Duty; but when it pleaſeth *God* to deprive him of his proſperity: he is very apt to be *extremely* diſquieted, and repining;

ing; and ſometimes to look upon himſelf as utterly forſaken of *God*, becauſe he is ſtrip'd of theſe *outward* things. He miſtakenly looks upon Temporal good things to be certain marks of God's favour: whereas in truth they are not, but he ſometimes deals them
Pſal. 73. *promiſcuouſly, as the rain deſcends both upon the juſt and the unjuſt.*

And what is the likely conſequence of ſuch an enormous love of the World? [if I ſay, it ſhould pleaſe God to bring ſuch an one into adverſity] but that he ſhould have *diſmal*, and even *deſpairing* Thoughts of his own condition. There have been frequent examples of

of this nature in the World: And *thus far* have theſe words of the Apoſtle been verify'd: *But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while ſome have coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themſelves through with many ſorrows.* 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10.

Let us not therefore ſet our affections too much upon theſe *fleeting* things: Let us enjoy every good thing with *ſubmiſſion* to, and *dependance* upon, God's Providence. Let us beware that we do not fix our Hearts

Hearts on any thing here below; neither *Riches*, *Poſſeſſions*, *Friends*, *Children*, nor any of theſe ſublunary things. For ſo doing hath oftentimes proved very fatal to many; and at laſt hath thrown them into Melancholy; nay, even into *Deſperation*.

VIII. The laſt Remedy againſt black, dreadful, or deſpairing Thoughts, is, *Religious* and *Cheerful* Converſation. 'Tis not *jolly*, *vain* Company; that will be of no uſe, but hurt: but *godly* and cheerful Society, will very much contribute to their cure. To be always poreing, *aggravates* the Malady, and *rivets* the Deſpair, and ſometimes proves fatal indeed:

And

And therefore a little good Converſation is very neceſſary. Religious Diſcourſes and Conferences, will keep out worſe Thoughts; and conduce very much to make us *rejoyce with them that do rejoyce.* There is a kind of Melody in them which (like that of *David's* Harp, when he play'd to *Saul*) will *drive away the evil Spirit.* 1 Sam. 16. 23.

'Tis a common thing for ſuch perſons as are troubled with this kind of thoughts, to affect ſolitude, and deſire to be always alone, and immur'd in their own ſad contemplations. But notwithſtanding the ſtrongeſt averſions to Company, which they may have; 'tis adviſable that againſt their Inclinations, they

they be brought in to good and cheerful Converſation; and that not once, or twice; but with Continuance. And this is a proper way (in time) to be rid of ſuch evil Thoughts. For, the *Devil*'s Temptations and Injections, eſpecially of this kind, are uſually more prevalent, and come with greater force, when people are alone, than when they are in Society. And then too, they are apt to dote upon their own Notions of things, hug their miſtakes, and think them true, however falſe and erroneous they may be.

A Religious and Cheerful Friend therefore I take in this caſe, to be of great advantage,

to

to comfort, adviſe, divert, and improve them in better things. And *more eſpecially* do I recommend the frequent Converſation of their Spiritual Guide. For it is not to be imagined what efficacy a ſeaſonable *Word* hath ſometimes: and what a ſweet alteration it cauſes in diſconſolate People. *It goeth like oyl into their bones:* or elſe (to uſe the Preacher's compariſon) *The words of the wiſe are as goads, and as nails faſtned by the Maſters of aſſemblies.* Good converſation, ſtrengthens and *exhilarates* the Spirits to a great degree; and is a very proper means againſt all *ſad* and *melancholy*, or *deſpairing* Thoughts. Eccleſ. 12. 11.

And indeed, I think, Religion is that which goes a great way towards the cure of Melancholy. And without it, 'tis hardly ever to be cur'd. 'Tis Religion muſt give a Man a rational, and a well-grounded hope of the ſecurity of his eternal condition hereafter; without which 'tis difficult to imagine how his heart ſhould ever be eaſy, and his Thoughts ſerene, quiet, and compos'd. And therefore he that would avoid this kind of evil Thoughts; I exhort and adviſe him firſt to fix the grand Point of Religion in himſelf; and then to cheriſh, and improve it by cheerful and Religious Converſation.

But

But in doing this, we must not think that we can be *always* imploy'd in Religion; that we can have our Thoughts ſtretch'd up always to ſuch a pitch; to be *continually* engag'd in the duties of Devotion; and be thinking that we cannot pleaſe God without it. For we have *Bodies* as well as *Souls*: We are *Men*, and not *Angels*. And therefore tho' we ſhould do our utmoſt, and with all imaginable ſincerity; yet we ſhould not lay too great a load upon our Spirits; for that may be the way inſtead of *preventing*, to *bring on ſad* and *melancholy* Thoughts. And 'tis what Almighty God no where requires of us, *Who* Heb. 6.

will have mercy, and not ſacrifice: and intended his Service for *perfect freedom*; and Religion for a *Law of liberty.*

Jam. 1. 25.

I have now done with this *laſt* kind of *evil thoughts, (viz.)* ſad, melancholy, or deſpairing Thoughts. And the Rules which have been laid down for the well-governing the Thoughts in *general*; and for the avoiding this ſort, and theſe *other* kinds of evil Thoughts, diſcours'd of in this Treatiſe, duly obſerv'd, will (by God's Bleſſing) have ſome good effect.

But as an *Appendix* to this Chapter, I ſhall endeavour to explain to you, what is the *ſin againſt the Holy-Ghoſt.* Becauſe

cauſe the fear that they have committed this *Unpardonable* Sin, hath horribly perplex'd and terrify'd the Thoughts of many dejected *Chriſtians*, even almoſt to *Deſperation*.

Now *every* Sin is indeed a Sin againſt the Holy-Ghoſt; and ſome are *grievances* of him. And therefore we are exhorted not to *Grieve the holy Spirit of God*. But THE SIN againſt the Holy-Ghoſt, which is pronounced by our Lord *Jeſus* himſelf to be *unpardonable* in *this* World, and in the World *to come*; is called alſo *Blaſphemy* againſt the *Holy-Ghoſt* by the Evangeliſts. In *Matth.* 12. 31, 32. the words are theſe: *Wherefore I ſay unto you, that*

Ephes. 4. 30.

all manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven; i. e. *is capable of being forgiven: but the Blaſphemy againſt the Holy-Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven unto men. And whoſoever ſpeaketh a word againſt the ſon of Man, it ſhall be forgiven him; but whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy-Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven; neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* In *Mark* 3. 28. *&c.* it is thus expreſs'd: *Verily I ſay unto you, All ſins ſhall be forgiven unto the ſons of men, and blaſphemies wherewith ſoever they ſhall blaſpheme; but he that blaſphemeth againſt the Holy-Ghoſt, hath never forgiveneſs, but is in danger of eternal damnation.* And in *Luke* 12. 10. there

there is but little variation: *Whoſoever ſhall ſpeak a word againſt the ſon of man, it ſhall be forgiven him; but unto him that blaſphemeth againſt the Holy-Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven.*

Now for the clearer underſtanding of theſe places which ſpeak of the *GREAT SIN*, You are to obſerve, That the two former of theſe Evangeliſts, St. *Matthew*, and St. *Mark*, in the Context, give us an account of our Saviour's having heal'd a Demoniak; and when he had expell'd the *Devil* by the power of the Holy-Ghoſt, (which he had without meaſure) to the great amazement of all the People: The Scribes

and Phariſees, whoſe hearts were ſowr'd with the leven of Pride and Envy; notwithſtanding their own Convictions, and in *ſpight* of the irreſiſtable Evidence of that and other Miracles, which our Saviour did; they blaſphemouſly aſcribed the doing of them to the *Devil*; repreſenting our Lord as a Wizard, or a Conjurer. And as abſurdly, as impiouſly ſaid, *He caſteth out devils by* Beelzebub, *the Prince of the devils.* The *Obſtinacy* and *Malice* of this imputation, our Saviour ſeverely reflects upon, and publickly declares, That theſe that out of an invenomed Spirit, and *wilful* ſpight, and againſt the ſtrongeſt

ſtrongeſt Convictions thus blaſpheme the Holy and Eternal Spirit, by the œconomy of whoſe Almighty Power theſe things were done; and thus endeavour to ſubvert the *whole* ſtructure of the Chriſtian Religion, and wilfully diſown *Chriſt* the Saviour. Theſe have no other means of ſalvation left them: no other Name under Heaven, by which they can be ſaved. There is no other *Chriſt*, no other Goſpel: And therefore nothing ſhall be the portion of ſuch Men, but eternal damnation.

From all which it is ſufficiently plain, That the ſin againſt the Holy-Ghoſt conſiſteth in *Words*; 'tis Blaſphemy.

And

And not every Blaſphemy againſt the Holy-Ghoſt neither. Not every one that ſpeaketh againſt the Holy-Ghoſt (as ſome Hereticks have done, and now do) is guilty of this unpardonable ſin: which is a Blaſphemy againſt the viſible glorious operations; the immediate effects and office of the Holy-Ghoſt; and ſuch too as is utter'd not out of *Fear*, *Infirmity*, or *Cowardize*; but out of an *hateful* and *malicious* Heart; not of *raſhneſs*, but of *ſet-purpoſe*, to do *deſpight* unto *Chriſt* his known Doctrine and Works: being accompany'd with an univerſal *defection*, or falling away from the whole truth of *God*.

So

So that (if this ſin in its formality could be committed now) from this ſhort explanation of the nature of it, I hope it doth appear, that none of theſe who are ſcar'd, and terrify'd with the apprehenſions of it, *can* have committed it. And that therefore their fears, and diſmal Thoughts about it, are *groundleſs* and *unreaſonable*; and ſtirred up by the common Enemy of our peace, in order to diſquiet and hinder them from doing their Duty, or to bring them into *Melancholy*, or *Deſpair*.

'Tis moſt certain, that all Perſons that wilfully run on in ſin, and *perſiſt* in impenitency, ſhall finally periſh for ever,

ever, as ſurely as if they had committed the *the great Sin* we are ſpeaking of. But 'tis alſo certain that thouſands do out of ignorance, or inadvertence, miſtake the nature of this unpardonable Sin, and are horribly afraid that they have committed it, tho' they know not what it is. The *vileſt* action, the *greateſt* ſin of Practiſe that can be committed, doth not extend to the ſin againſt the Holy-Ghoſt. And therefore ſuch a ſin calls indeed for the deepeſt ſorrow, and humiliation, and moſt unfeign'd repentance: But the ſin againſt the Holy-Ghoſt, and *Repentance*, are things very inconſiſtent. And this ariſeth not from

from any defect of Mercy in God, or want of Merit in the Blood of *Christ*; but from an incapacity in the Offender. Upon the whole then you see what this *Concluding* sin is; and consequently how little reason many poor dejected Souls have to be affrighted, with the thoughts of having committed it; and to sink, and despond upon mere *Doubts*, *Conjectures* and *Suspicions*.

CHAP. X.

NO Man can be a good *Christian* indeed, that hath not a special regard to his Thoughts, and doth not en-

endeavour to have them pure, holy, and conformable to the Laws of the Gospel. And the government of the Thoughts, is an happiness *never* to be attained, without the most deep and serious consideration, and a *ready* and *willing* application of Our selves to proper means: The which I have in the preceding Chapters endeavour'd to lay before you. And we may not think that it is altogether impossible to put them in practise. There is unquestionably a great deal in our own power, in order to it, as plainly appears from the whole series of this Treatise. And 'tis no more than what is the evident *Design* of the *Christian* Religion.

gion. By which the great excellency of it, not only above all other Arts and Sciences, which (in their perfection) are only the riches and ornaments of the outward Man, but beyond all other Religions whatsoever, is manifeſt.

Chriſtianity ſoars above all the tempting gayeties, and little *noiſy* vanities of this World. It is not its buſineſs to ſeek after the *ſilly* applauſes of the Age, or popular admiration: 'Tis not be ſeen of Men, or to inherit this *Bubble*. 'Tis not only to appear *outwardly* great, or good; but the deſign of it is an *internal* Purity and Holineſs; a conformity of our *Thoughts* to the Rules of the Goſpel. The

The *Philoſophy* of the Gentile World tho' it went far, yet came vaſtly ſhort of it. And all the excellent Rules delivered by the ancient *Moraliſts*, for the government of Life, are much *below* the Divine Oracles. As for the *Jewiſh* Religion, it conſiſted of meer
Gal. 4. 9. Elements, and firſt Rudiments.
Gal. 3. 24. The *Law* being (as the Apoſtle tells us) but *as the Schoolmaſter to bring us unto* Chriſt. The Law was delivered in *blackneſs and thick darkneſs* on
Deut. 4. 11. Mount *Sinai*; and indeed 'twas but *Darkneſs* in compariſon of the more *Bright* diſcoveries of the Evangelical State, which conſiſteth not in Types, Figures, and ſhadows, and Parabo-

rabolical, and Myſtical Rites; but in plain, and perfective Precepts: In ſuch admirable Rules, and Directions, as duly obſerv'd, will wonderfully enrich and beautify the *Soul*, and bring it *near* to perfection, by a reſemblance of GOD himſelf; and diſpoſe, and prepare it for the Bliſsful enjoyment of Heaven, and the Beatifick Viſion.

The Rites of the *Pagan* Religions did conſiſt in the vileſt impurities. And as for *Mahomet*; as *Ambition* and *Luſt* were the firſt Motives to his Impoſture; ſo *Lewdneſs* and *Obſcenity* is his *Heaven* too. And indeed *other* Religions too

have taken care to propagate uncleanness under the specious pretences of a *Retluse* Life, and the *severest* purity.

But true Religion indeed, such as our Lord *Jesus* always preach'd, and urg'd upon Men, and is built upon the genuine design of the holy Scriptures; refines and purifies the Soul to the utmost: will not *allow* Men in a loose or an *Evil Thought*, much less grant them *Indulgences*, for all manner of Lewdness, and dispence with such things, as are not fit to be named among *Christians*. But it's only Design and Intention is to make Men like Angels, and the *pure* Celestial Spirits;

and

and qualify them for *their* Society and Happineſs to everlaſting Ages.

This plainly ſhews us the excellency of the *Chriſtian* Religion above any other Inſtitution in the World: powerfully recommends it to our choice, and convinceth us of the *neceſſity* of being good and holy, if we would be eternally happy: and of the great importance of our ſerious and Religious *Application* and *Improvement* of theſe words of the eternal Son of GOD: *---For out of the Heart proceed Evil Thoughts.*

I conclude with that appoſite Advice of the holy Apoſtle St. *Paul: Finally, Brethren;* Phil. 4. 8. &c.

whatſoever things are true; whatſoever things are honeſt; whatſoever things are juſt; whatſoever things are pure; whatſoever things are lovely; whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any vertue, and if there be any praiſe, think *on theſe things.*

FINIS.

THE
PRAYER
FOR A
Melancholy Perſon.

O Eternal, moſt gracious, & moſt holy Lord God! Thou Father of Lights, and Fountain of Good! Thou art infinitely and eſſentially happy and bleſſed in thy ſelf, and diffuſeſt the beams of thy Favour and Goodneſs throughout the whole World. I am a *Monument* of thy Mercy and Forbearance: and when I conſider what I have been, and done, I cannot but *wonder* at

thy loving Kindneſs! O Lord, I lye proſtrate at the Throne of Grace in an humble ſence and acknowledgment of my own vileneſs, and in a ſorrowful confeſſion of my Sins, which have been *exceeding* many, and grievouſly provoking. I have deſerved *Eternal* puniſhment and *horrour*, and therefore do not repine at my preſent Affliction. *Why ſhould a living man complain, a Man for the puniſhment of his ſin?* But, O Lord! thou art our *FATHER*, and to whom ſhould we lay open our wants, but to a *Father? Look therefore upon my affliction and miſery, and forgive me all my ſins.* ---*Thy*

hand

hand is heavy upon me day and night, and my moisture is like the drought in summer. --- My heart also in the midst of my Body is even like melting wax. I am cast down, O Lord! I am beset with fears and terrours; encompassed about with thick clouds of sadness! ---*But yet I hope to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*--- Lord, sanctify this great affliction to me! And let not any of the *Devil's* temptations prevail with me, to let go my hope in *Christ*. Grant me, I beseech thee, trust and affiance in thy Mercy; and let me not make *Sin* my refuge, or seek comfort and redress from any *indirect*

means: But patiently wait on thee, O *GOD*, who alone *bringeſt down, and raiſeſt up, who killeſt, and makeſt alive.* O Lord, be pleas'd to pardon, and forgive me all my ſins; and to heal all my *Bodily* weakneſſes and infirmities, and to quiet and compoſe my Spirits. O Lord, ſpeak peace unto me thy ſervant; give thy ſervant the Bleſſing of peace. *---Thou ſearcheſt me out, and knoweſt me: Thou underſtandeſt my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and about my bed;* and ſeeſt in what ſadneſs I paſs the day and the night. O Lord, ſend down the Holy-ghoſt the *Comforter*, to enlighten and comfort my poor Soul, and

to

to ſanctify and hallow all the faculties and powers thereof. Cleanſe it of all *prophane*, *impure*, *revengeful*, *wandring* or *deſponding* Thoughts, and all *other* evil Imaginations; and let not my Heart be inclined to any evil thing. Vouchſafe, I beſeech thee, O Lord, to direct, ſanctify and govern both my Heart and Body in the ways of thy Laws, and in the Works of thy Commandments, that among all the changes and chances of this mortal Life, I may ever be defended by thy moſt gracious and ready help. And, O Lord God Almighty, unto whom all Hearts be open, all deſires known, and from whom

whom no ſecrets are hid, cleanſe the Thoughts of my Heart, by the Inſpiration of the Holy Spirit, that I may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name. Thou ſeeſt, O Lord, that I have no power of my ſelf to help my ſelf keep me therefore both outwardly in my body, and inwardly in my Soul; that I may be defended from all adverſities, which may happen to the Body; and from all *Evil Thoughts*, which may aſſault and hurt the Soul: And at laſt bring me to that bleſſed ſtate, where I ſhall ſerve, love, and worſhip thee without fear or diſtraction; and be

out

out of the reach of all my Spiritual Enemies, and enjoy *consummate* tranquillity, and bliss. And all I most humbly and earnestly beg, in and through the meritorious *Agonies* and *Death* of *Jesus Christ*, our only Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

Our Father, &c.

Books printed for, and ſold by Charles Yeo, John Pearce, *and* Philip Biſhop, *Bookſellers in* Exon.

A Sermon preached in the Cathedral Church of St. *Peter* in *Exon*, *April* 4. 1697. being *Eaſter-day*, and Aſſize Sunday: By *William Chilcot*, M. A.

Select Hymns, each fitted to two Tunes, to be ſung in Churches.

The Beauty of Holineſs: or, A ſhort Defence and Vindication of the pious Decency, Regularity, and Order of Reading the Communion-Service, at the Communion-Table; offered to a diſſatify'd Neighbour, from his Miniſter.

A Form of Prayer for Married Perſons, for the moſt part taken out of the Liturgy.

In

In the PRESS.

Danmonii Orientales Illustres: or, The Worthies of *Devon*; Printed by way of Subscription, price in Sheets Sixteen *Shillings* and Six pence; the first Payment eight *Shillings*. All Gentlemen that are willing to take the Advantage by Subscribing, are desired to send in their first payment with all speed to the Undertakers, *Charles Yeo*, *John Pearse*, and *Philip Bishop*.